

UNDERSTANDING

# HEGEL'S

MATURE CRITIQUE OF

# KANT

JOHN McCUMBER

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Immanuel Kant, <i>Gesammelte Schriften</i> (Akademie-Ausgabe)
CPR A, B	Immanuel Kant, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , “A” (1781) and “B” (1787) editions
CPrR	Immanuel Kant, <i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>
CW	John McCumber, <i>The Company of Words</i>
Enz.	G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundriss</i> , cited by section number
N	Immanuel Kant, <i>Reflexionen</i>
PhR	G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Philosophy of Right</i> , cited by section number
RPh1817/19	G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Die Philosophie des Rechts: Die Mitschriften Wannemann (Heidelberg 1817/18) und Homeyer (Berlin 1818/19)</i>
RPh1819/20	G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819/20 in einer Nachschrift</i>



## A NOTE ON THE TEXTS

### WORKS BY HEGEL

Hegel's works will normally be cited by volume and page number of Hegel, *Werke*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970–1971); the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* and *The Philosophy of Right* will be cited by section number, to highlight the *Anmerkungen* (*Anm.*), or “remarks,” in that edition, and its *Zusätze* (*Zus.*), or “supplements” (see McCumber 1993, xix, for the status of these).

The following are not available in that edition:

*Die Philosophie des Rechts: Die Mitschriften Wannemann (Heidelberg 1817/18) und Homeyer (1918–19)*. Edited by Karl-Heinz Ilting. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1983.

*Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819/20 in einer Nachschrift*. Edited by Dieter Henrich. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1983.

Page numbers of English translations are given after a slash. The following translations have been used, keyed here to the corresponding volume (and in some cases page numbers) of the *Werke* where applicable.

2:9–138. *Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*. Edited and translated by H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1977.

2:287–433. *Faith and Knowledge*. Edited and translated by Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1977.

2:434–530. *Natural Law*. Translated by T. M. Knox. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975.

3. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

- 5–6. *Science of Logic*. Translated by A. V. Miller. New York: Humanities Press, 1976.
7. *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Edited by Allen W. Wood and translated by H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
8. *The Encyclopedia Logic*. Translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1991.
9. *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*. Edited and translated by Michael John Petry. 3 vols. London: Allen & Unwin, 1970.
- 12:11–141. *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*. Translated by Leo Rauch. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1988.
- 13–15. *Aesthetics*. Translated by T. M. Knox. 2 vols. with consecutive pagination. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Hegel and the Human Spirit*. Translation of the Jena *Philosophy of Mind* by Leo Rauch. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983.
- Miscellaneous Writings of G. W. F. Hegel*. Edited by Jon Stewart. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002.
- Political Writings*. Edited and translated by Lawrence Dickey and H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

## WORKS BY KANT

Kant's works will be cited by volume and page number of Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 29 vols. (Berlin: Akademie-Ausgabe, 1902–). Pagination of this edition is given marginally in the following translations, keyed here to the corresponding volume (and in some cases page numbers) of the Akademie-Ausgabe.

- 3 (“B” edition); 4:1–252 (“A” edition variants from “B” edition). *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965.
- 4:255–383. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Translated and edited by Gary Hatfield. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- 5:3–163. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Translated by Lewis White Beck. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956.
- 5:167–485. *Critique of Judgment*. Translated by Werner Pluhar. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987.

12. *Philosophical Correspondence 1759–99*. Edited and translated by Arnulf Zweig. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

All translations unless otherwise noted are my own.



UNDERSTANDING HEGEL'S  
MATURE CRITIQUE OF KANT





## A SHORT INTRODUCTION

### TO AN ENDLESS TASK

SOMEONE WHO PROPOSES to add to the large and growing literature on Hegel's relationship to Kant must begin with two questions: "Why?" and "How?"

As to the why, the burgeoning of relevant literature attests to the importance of sorting out Hegel's criticisms of Kant. The reasons for the importance, however, are complex and even subtle. I will begin with two, of which the first and narrower is that getting clear on Hegel's criticisms of Kant can help us understand Hegel, whose entire philosophy is marked by his appropriation of the most important German philosopher of his youth. Even before we know how Hegel comes down on specific issues, we can see that where he locates himself with respect to Kant will be an index to his entire philosophical project.

This certainly holds for Hegel's criticisms of Kant's theoretical philosophy. Suppose, for example, that Hegel thinks Kant was wrong in denying intellectual intuition to us. Since intellectual intuition is for Hegel a license for "seeing" a priori truths, accepting that we possess it would by his own account free him to produce a philosophy which is a series of intuitive aperçus, or, using his term, "immediate" insights.<sup>1</sup> If, on the other hand, Hegel thinks Kant is right that we do not have intellectual intuition, then his system must be a chain of "mediations," or inferences of some sort.

Or take Kant's famous distinction between things in themselves and appearances, one clear point of which is to restrict knowledge to the latter. If Hegel thinks Kant gets this distinction wrong, then Kant's restriction of knowledge to appearances may fail in such a way as to allow knowledge of non-empirical

“noumena” such as God, freedom, and the immortal soul. Hegel would then be free to return to any of a number of pre-Kantian versions of metaphysics, or even (see note 1) to Schelling. If, on the other hand, Hegel thinks Kant is correct in his distinction and restriction, then Hegel’s own philosophy cannot be metaphysical, at least in those senses; it must therefore be some sort of reflection on appearances, perhaps of the kind that Left Hegelians such as Karl Marx found in it.

Or finally, take Kant’s distinction between the empirically real and the transcendently ideal. This is the notion that the “formal” components of our experiences (such as spatiotemporal and causal ordering) are results of the mind’s activities, while their “material” or concrete components are not. Such a distinction does no apparent work *within* Hegel’s philosophy, so if he accepts it at all he must be operating entirely on one side of it or the other. If he has opted for a philosophy of the empirically real, he is (once again) engaging in philosophy as an empirical reflection on given realities; if instead he has opted for a philosophy of the transcendently ideal, he is (like Kant himself) articulating a priori activities of the thinking mind. Finally, if Hegel rejects the distinction altogether, then either concrete things and their properties are supplied by the mind, and Hegel is a sort of Berkeleyan idealist; or they are not, and he is a naïve realist.

These views—that Hegel’s thought is a congeries of aperçus, that it claims knowledge of noumena, that it is a reflection on history, and so forth—are all standard with respect to Hegel, and they all coordinate with one or another of his putative positions on Kant. Hegel’s final stance on Kant, whatever it will be, thus indicates how he stands with respect to himself, and if his critique of Kant’s theoretical philosophy achieves nothing else, it teaches us about Hegel. That it achieves nothing else may indeed be the case. Hegel’s criticisms of Kant’s views on knowledge and ontology often seem to miss Kant’s point entirely, as Barbara Herman has observed; and when they get him right, they often appear to be grounded in what Karl Ameriks calls a “question-begging assumption of absolute idealism.”<sup>2</sup> But even if they lead nowhere but to Hegel, the criticisms he makes of Kant at least furnish a road to understanding—Hegel.

When Hegel’s attack moves from theoretical issues such as the above to target the “formalism” and “emptiness” of Kant’s moral theory, it gains a second sort of importance, at once broader and more robust—so robust that it virtually haunts contemporary ethical and social thought. Many of Hegel’s criticisms of Kantian moral theory seem to be grounded not in his own mysterious philosophy but in an entirely reasonable insistence that such theory must be able to

provide concrete guidance in life. If Kant's categorical imperative is as empty as both Hegel and Kant say it is, it cannot do this. Of what use can it be?

This criticism is sensible enough that many philosophers have fallen in with it, from Alasdair MacIntyre to Charles Taylor to Bernard Williams.<sup>3</sup> Their work has provoked, in turn, defenses of Kant on the part of thinkers such as Karl Ameriks (2000) and Sally Sedgwick (2000a). Attempts to form a middle ground, by emending Kant so that Hegel's criticisms no longer apply, constitute a major theme of the ethical thought of John Rawls and many who have been inspired by him, such as Barbara Herman and Christine Korsgaard.<sup>4</sup>

The demand for moral relevance gains further contemporary resonance because it leads us back to the issue of the nature of philosophy itself. David Papineau has argued that the fundamental dispute in contemporary philosophy is not between analytic and continental thought but between various updatings of Kantian transcendentalism, on the one hand, and various versions of philosophical "naturalism," on the other.<sup>5</sup> At its broadest construal, this debate pits universalistic neo-Kantians, from the logical positivists to Habermas and Rawls, against historically embedded "naturalists" as diverse as Derrida, Rorty, Taylor, and Williams—as well as against people whose concrete concerns and standpoints place them outside academic philosophy altogether: the feminists, gender theorists, and race theorists whose works are now among the liveliest in the university. As Herman (2007c, viii) suggests, Hegel's critique of Kantian moral theory was the opening salvo in what became that debate. In it the concrete, situated, and in certain senses "naturalistic" style pioneered by Hegel confronted for the first time the thin, universalistic, and argumentatively purified style of philosophy which had found its most rigorous expression in Kant.<sup>6</sup> Understanding Hegel's salvo can help us find our way among the ensuing volleys, which have still not died away.

## SYSTEM AND CRITIQUE

Hegel's criticisms of Kant are thus undeniably important, but that alone cannot justify adding to such an already extensive literature. I can begin my apologia by attending to a curious fact about Hegel's criticisms of Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy: they seem to come from two different angles. If Hegel's attacks on the theoretical philosophy strike, as Ameriks suggests, from the lofty but dubious ether of "absolute idealism," many of his criticisms of Kantian moral theory seem to rise from the humbler provinces of common sense. How

might these fit together? Is there enough coherence to Hegel's criticisms of Kant that they amount to a unified "critique" of him? Or are they merely a series of complaints, each to be accepted or refuted without regard to the others?

The latter view is most clearly and vigorously presented by Ameriks in his *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy* (2000). Ameriks's account is structured as a series of Kantian topics (the transcendental deduction, the nature of critique, the thing in itself, the antinomies, and so forth), to which are successively applied reconstructions of Hegel's views on them—views which are in turn characterized as "not very clear" (275), "confusion" (276), the "question-begging assumption of absolute idealism" referred to above (280), "misleading" (289), "hardly persuasive" (292) "unfair" (299), "difficult to approve of" (301) "frustrating" (302), "difficult to determine" (303), "disturbing" (304), entirely missing Kant's "underlying aim" (305), "questionable" (307), a "serious" misrepresentation of Kant's argument (308), and—the final, understated nail in the coffin—"overconfident" (308).

Ameriks's approach clearly does not stack any decks in Hegel's favor, and it is equally clear that much has gone right with it. His indefatigable investigations of Hegel's possible views on various Kantian topics concerning which Hegel himself all too often provides no clear discussion are illuminating, and his conclusions are often unimpeachable. But when the result of a scholarly investigation is to make the reader wonder why it was ever worth undertaking in the first place, something has also, clearly, gone wrong. Ameriks's own acuity, plus his concern to be fair to Hegel, suggests that what has gone wrong is the basic strategy: that of trying to discuss Hegel's critique of Kant in Kantian terms, rather than Hegel's own. Indeed, in Hegel's ferociously systematic philosophy, coherence itself is a form of warrant; and this suggests that his criticisms of Kant would look better, or at least more Hegelian, if formulated as a coherent critique.

Robert Pippin (2008) has identified another problem with viewing Hegel's criticism of Kant as merely what he calls a series of "interesting ad hoc arguments against particular claims" (124): most of those isolated arguments just happen to have the same target—they are all directed against some version of liberal individualism. Such a coincidence of targets suggests that they are interconnected in their origins as well—in some coherent view according to which liberal individualism is mistaken. We thus have further reason to assume, if only provisionally, that Hegel's criticisms of Kant should be treated as a unified critique developed, so to speak, *aus Prinzipien*—that they follow from a unified

set of anti-individualistic premises. In which case, Hegel's case against Kant is part of a broader, and more important, case against liberal individualism itself. The full scope of that case cannot be understood unless we uncover its basic premises, access to which is provided by Hegel's critique of Kant.

This raises the question of whether Hegel's basic *Prinzipien* can be supplied by anything other than his own philosophy. Is Hegel's critique of Kant grounded in his own thought, which means first and foremost in his logic of "absolute idealism"?<sup>7</sup> Or can grounds for it be found in something other, and more palatable, than Hegelianism—such as common sense?

In the case of Hegel's criticisms of Kant's theoretical philosophy, it is hard to see what that more palatable something could be. Even on first appearance, those criticisms have notably little to do with common sense, and so must rest on something distinctively Hegelian—which would mean on his own thought.<sup>8</sup> With regard to Hegel's criticisms of Kant's practical philosophy, the problem becomes rather different. This is because, as I noted above, there seem to be two bases for those criticisms. One candidate is his philosophy as a whole, which can be taken to supply their basic premises. It may also be possible, however, to derive those premises from a commonsensical desire for concrete relevance, plus an acute understanding of just what, in the modern world, moral and social theory should be relevant *to*.

Given the fiendish difficulty of Hegel's texts, and of his logic in particular, the latter approach is the more tempting. Three of the most important American writers on the moral and social philosophy advanced in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*—Michael Hardimon, Frederick Neuhouser, and Allen Wood—employ it. As we will see in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5, they accept the basic premises of the *Philosophy of Right* as valid on *non-Hegelian* grounds—in general, their relevance for modern life.<sup>9</sup>

Hegel himself, however, testifies strongly for the opposite view. There are no fewer than twenty-four passages in the *Philosophy of Right* where, though he has promised to explain "procedural matters" (*Fortgang*) only as necessary, he explicitly refers the reader to his other works.<sup>10</sup> One wonders what it would be like to approach passages such as *PhR*, § 42 without knowing what Hegel means by *Sache*, § 65 without knowledge of *Entäusserung*, § 83 without knowledge of *Schein*, § 129 without knowledge of *Idee*, or § 207 without knowledge of *Dasein*—all terms importantly treated in Hegel's logic and in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Moreover, writers such as Will Dudley, David Kolb, and Robert Williams have successfully used Hegel's logic to expound the *Philosophy*

*of Right*, including its criticisms of Kant.<sup>11</sup> Their success, which will be evident in what follows, is important testimony for the former approach—more credible, perhaps, than Hegel's own, since like many philosophers he appears to have been too invested in his system to miss a chance to advertise it.

Yet another indication that we cannot understand Hegel's critique of Kant apart from the larger philosophical project in which it is embedded arises from a curious type of agreement between Kant and Hegel: they often attribute the same doctrine to Kant, but Hegel sees it as a problem while Kant sees it as a strength. Thus, for example, both Hegel and Kant agree that Kant holds the categorical imperative to be empty, and Hegel (famously) sees this as a fatal problem. Kant, of course, does not; as Pippin puts it, "Kant constantly insisted that one of the great *values* of his approach was its formality."<sup>12</sup>

The curious agreements go deeper: Hegel and Kant often agree, not only on what Kant has said but also on its truth. We will see that many of Hegel's most fundamental criticisms of Kant in fact attack him not for asserting falsehoods but for omissions (e.g., of a theory of action), for uselessness (the thing in itself), and for unsystematic behavior (failure to define "will").<sup>13</sup> What one identifies as problematic in these senses is a function of one's overall philosophical outlook, and Hegel's apparently reasonable insistence that philosophy should be more concrete than Kant's is not a mere matter of temperament; it has to do with what each man thought philosophy was and could be. We cannot understand Hegel's critique of Kant, then, without understanding how Hegel identifies problems in Kant and why he thinks he can overcome them. And this unavoidably raises the deeper issue of the nature of Hegel's whole philosophical project.

Finally, in criticizing Kant in the ways that he does, Hegel takes on certain burdens. If, for example, he identifies the emptiness of the categorical imperative as a problem, he must show us how he can fill it in; otherwise it is not a problem at all, but simply a limit. If he thinks it is wrong for Kant to omit a theory of action from moral theory, he is obliged to show us how one can be included. If he criticizes Kant for unsystematic behavior, he must show us what a philosophical system is and how it is possible to construct one. It is unclear, however, what Hegel's solutions to problems like these could be. In traditional logic, for example, what starts empty stays empty: either the moral law somehow has content from the beginning, in which case it is not what Kant would recognize as a moral law at all; or it stays empty, and Hegel's critique goes nowhere. What *untraditional* logic has Hegel invented?

This and many other problems with Hegel's overall philosophical project provide good reasons for commentators to avoid asking how that project might ground his criticisms of Kant. Still, the success of other commentators, as well as Hegel's own testimony, suggests that if we take Hegel's attack on Kant to constitute a unified critique, rather than a mere series of complaints, we should at least try to ground it in his philosophy as a whole. This is no new contention. Almost a generation before Dudley, Kolb, and Williams, John Smith (1973, 438) put it as follows:

One feels both the presence and the force of [Hegel's] philosophical vision to a peculiar degree just at those points where he considers the thought of others. . . . The ultimate validity of Hegel's critique of Kant is made to depend on the viability of Hegel's own system.

And not, as we will now see, the reverse.

### HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLING

If we want to see Hegel's criticisms of Kant in the light of Hegel's overall project, our problems only begin with the most obvious one: the stony impenetrability of Hegel's texts. The question of how to understand them, even on the most basic levels, projects us into the most intractable of exegetical quandaries, the hermeneutical circle. Do we start with an overall account of Hegel's philosophical project, in order to contextualize his criticisms of Kant within it as they are introduced? Where would we get such an account? Might it not be better to start with the various specific criticisms of Kant that Hegel makes, in the hope with which I began—the hope that pursuing them to their depths will lead us to understanding Hegel's philosophy as a whole? This approach at least promises a middle way between giving an overall account of Hegel's philosophy and ignoring it altogether. Thus, Ivan Soll has written, "Hegel's entire program and conception of philosophy depended on refuting Kant's limitation of reason."<sup>14</sup> If that is the case, we can expect to understand the program from the refutation. But is it the case? We can hardly verify Soll's claim by presupposing it.

When we look at what Hegel meant by "refutation," moreover, we see that there must be aspects of Hegel's own philosophical project which are not determined by his criticisms of Kant—which are, so to speak, Kant-independent. For Hegel does not understand "refutation" to be showing that a doctrine is simply false, thereby rendering his own negation of that doctrine true; rather,



philosophical refutation must recognize that the refuted system “is perfectly true; but *it is not the highest standpoint*. . . . On the contrary, the true system, as the higher, must contain the subordinate system within itself” (6:249–250/580).

When Hegel talks, in the *Science of Logic*, about the internal refutation of Spinoza—a discussion which is clearly intended more widely—he explicitly denies that this means bothering with Spinoza’s philosophy as Spinoza himself presented it: “It is from the context itself in which Spinoza’s system emerges *here* that its true standpoint and the question of whether it is true or false proceed” (6:249; my translation).

It is I, to be sure, who have emphasized “here” in the quotation above; but it is Hegel who goes on to identify the relevant context with his own logical account of essence. Thus, when Hegel says that “genuine refutation must penetrate the opponent’s stronghold and meet him on his own ground” (6:250/581), he does not mean to proceed by bracketing his own philosophical views and expounding Spinoza in Spinoza’s terms. Giving Spinozism its best chance means, rather, freeing it from the imperfections it has owing to the man Spinoza and presenting it in its strongest form: as “contained” in the “truest” system, which of course is Hegel’s own.

Just what this appeal to refutation-by-subordination means in the case of Kant will occupy us later. For the moment, if Hegel’s philosophy is to “contain” Kant’s as subordinate, it must also contain something else which is “superordinate” to Kant and therefore not derived from him. An account of Hegel’s philosophical project must therefore begin by recognizing that at least some aspects of Hegel’s overall project may be Kant independent.

Given the enormous prestige of Kant’s philosophy today—he is the most recent philosopher recognized as great by both analytical and continental philosophers, for example—Kant independence is not easy to achieve. The conundrum is posed by the title of an indispensable German anthology from the 1980s: *Kant oder Hegel?* (Henrich 1983b). On the obvious reading, the title asks us to choose: will it be Kant, or will it be Hegel? On a deeper reading, however, it is the “oder” itself which is being questioned: is the relationship of Kant and Hegel really a matter of either/or? A Kantian answer to this question would be yes; the Hegelian answer is no. To choose Hegel, for Hegel, means to get what is best in Kant. For him, then, it is a matter of *Kant und Hegel*, not *Kant oder Hegel*. Indeed, since Hegel’s critical subordination of Kant captures what is best and leaves out the rest (which I advance as a short gloss on Hegel’s term “sublation”), it is not merely a matter of *Kant und Hegel* but of *Kant durch Hegel*;

or (to finish with the German) *ohne Hegel kein Kant*: Kant only becomes himself, for Hegel, when Hegel comprehends him. And it is with the nature of that comprehension, that is, with the nature of Hegel's overall project, that we must, provisionally at least, begin—as I will, in Chapter 1.

## LIMITING THE INVESTIGATION

It is clear, I take it, that Hegel's criticisms of Kant are indeed, as the size of the literature suggests, of potentially great philosophical importance and a valuable index to Hegel's own philosophical project. It is not clear, however, that they have been fully understood. In this book I will pursue such understanding on the basis of an overall view of Hegel as engaging in a sort of philosophy of language which, anchored in Hamann and Herder (for which see McCumber 1993, 290–299), is very different from the kind pursued today in the wake of Frege and Russell. This pursuit shows a number of common views to be misconceptions. I will argue, for example, that Hegel's view of intellectual intuition does not replace Kant's "human centered" philosophy with a "God's eye" view but embeds intellectual intuition in the most human of phenomena: language. Hegel's views on idealism will turn out to be similarly embedded, which makes them compatible with realism. And Hegel will be seen to criticize Kant's categorical imperative not for being too empty but for not being empty enough. This approach lightens my overall task here in four ways. First, the new understanding I provide of Hegel's criticisms of Kant is enough for the moment. Detailed evaluations of Hegel's criticisms of Kant can be postponed, though it will be apparent that they look better in the light of my overall interpretation of Hegel than they look in some others—and far better than when such interpretation is dispensed with.

Second, my treatment of the enormous secondary literature can be unheroic, for much of it is devoted to refining approaches that I will not take. I will confine myself, as I have so far, to authors who help me state my case (often, to be sure, by disagreeing with it). I do intend, however, in the course of this to discuss representatives of the main scholarly approaches.

Third, Hegel writes from his own standpoint only in mature works, the ones that follow the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (which aims to establish that standpoint). I will largely confine myself to those works, which (as we will see) have not been emphasized in the literature.<sup>15</sup>

Fourth and finally, what I will offer is hardly a full treatment of Hegel's critique of Kant. Such a treatment would be not a long but an endless task,

for every point on which Hegel diverges from Kant can count as an implicit critique of him. Such divergences are to be found throughout Hegel's writings, indeed on almost every page. When Hegel discusses the *Ramayana*<sup>16</sup> and Kant does not, for example, is this not an implicit criticism of Kant? Is it (or is it not) a specific case of Hegel's general complaint that Kant is too "formalistic" to deal philosophically with concrete phenomena? The number of possible issues on which Hegel critically engages Kant quickly becomes overwhelming and the task of investigating them all interminable. The panoply of complaints must be reduced to a few central issues. The principles of this triage are central to the "how" of the investigation and so need explanation and defense at the outset.

One way to handle the issue would be simply to restrict myself to the topics that are most widely discussed in the contemporary literature. But while that literature is usually an excellent guide to what is most central in Hegel's critique of Kant, to make it the sole guide is problematic, because what is important to us may not have been important to Hegel. Since what was important to him very likely affects what he says about what is important to us, we should begin from as close to his end as we can.

Another way of determining what was important to Hegel in his critique of Kant would be to look to his own explicit discussions of Kant, focusing on those that are the most lengthy and developed. But this, too, can be misleading, for extended discussion often signals complexity rather than centrality. Kant, for example, has a lengthy and tangled footnote on the question of whether barbers should vote.<sup>17</sup> The issue is complex and as Kant develops it fascinating, but it is hardly central to his philosophy. Similarly, perhaps, for Hegel: it is quite possible that fundamental starting points for his criticisms of Kant are expressed only briefly or even not at all.

This suggests that we should focus the investigation on those criticisms of Kant which are logically basic to the others. But then the question arises: basic to what others? To the whole panoply of explicit and implicit criticisms? Or to a subset of them? On either answer, the problem of how to limit the investigation simply returns.

## BEYOND THE LIMITS OF CRITIQUE

My own approach will be as follows. The critical philosophy of Kant is, from beginning to end, an exploration of rational validity. Establishing the valid uses of our rational powers means distinguishing these from invalid uses.

These misuses, in turn, usually have to do with misapplication, with applying one rational power, or faculty, to objects and issues that are either the proper concern of another faculty or else beyond our powers altogether. Thus, Locke attempted to derive the categories of the understanding from sensibility, which led him to the sin of metaphysics (*CPR* B, 127). Metaphysics, for its part, is famously the attempt to gain knowledge of external realities from reason alone, which is beyond our cognitive powers altogether.

Critique for Kant is therefore centrally concerned with establishing and guarding the limits of our mental powers:

What through [the critique of pure reason] we prove from principles [*aus Prinzipien*]—and do not by any means merely conjecture—are not merely limitations [*Schranken*] but the determinate limits [*Grenzen*] of reason; that is, what we thus prove is reason's ignorance not merely in some part or other [of its activity] but in regard to all possible questions of a certain kind. (*CPR* B, 789)<sup>18</sup>

Those questions are of course questions of whether “noumena” such as God, the immortal soul, and freedom, which our reason can think but for which we have no intuitions, actually exist. Our inability to answer any questions of this type poses a problem with regard to practical reason, where the boundary of cognition needs to be extended so that we can accept the free will as the cause of our actions even though we have no intuition of it. The problem is that according to the first *Critique*, in order to be validly called a cause something must be capable of being displayed in intuition. But the free will is a noumenon, so no intuition can display it. The will itself must therefore be thought of as empty. Among the intuitions that are thereby placed beyond the boundary of the purely moral, as Kant puts it in the *Groundwork*, is the intuition of an object to be achieved by moral action:

If practical reason were to fetch in addition an object of the will, that is a motive, from the world of understanding, then it would overstep its limits [*Grenze*] and pretend to cognition of something of which it knows nothing. (*AA*, 4:458)

The transcendental limit of the will is thus revealed in its pure formality (see *CPrR*, *AA*, 5:54–55). All concrete content lies beyond.

Kant's general concern with limits takes on more complexity in the *Critique of Judgment*, where he writes:

The field of this critique extends to all the claims these [cognitive] powers can make, in order to place these powers within the limits [*Grenzen*] of their rightful use. (*AA*, 5:176)

The concept of rightful limit underlies the whole structure of “realms,” “territories,” and “domains” which, in the second introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*, sets its problematic (AA, 5:174). The complexities of that problematic need not be set forth here, but a first step toward their solution is the claim that the power of judgment is “heautonomous”: where the understanding and reason legislate (in different ways) to possible experience, judgment legislates only to itself. What it legislates is the principle that the many and diverse laws of nature must have the kind of unity they would have if they had been legislated by an intellect—the principle of the “purposiveness of nature” (AA, 5:180, 185–186).

Kant describes this as a principle for the “specification of nature” (AA, 5:186), and when we see it in that light we see that he is excluding another way of understanding the differences and similarities of natural species: historically, that is, in terms of how they came to be. The historical approach to the specification of nature is not only tempting but commendable. As Kant puts it in the *Critique of Judgment*:

It is commendable to do comparative anatomy and go through all the vast creation of organic beings in nature, in order to see if we cannot discover in it something like a system, and in particular *according to the principle of their production*. . . . So many genera of animals share a common schema on which not only their bone structure but also the arrangement of their other parts seems to be based: the basic outline is admirably simple but yet was able to *produce* this great diversity of species, by shortening some parts and lengthening others. (AA, 5:418; emphasis added)

Viewing different species in terms of the principles of their production, while “commendable,” cannot be pursued on a transcendental level, because to talk about how a species came into being is to make a causal claim. On a universal level (“all species came into being from other species”) such a claim could be philosophically validated only as causality itself is validated—as a case of the mind’s legislating to possible experience. But we are dealing here not with the understanding, which legislates to nature, but with judgment; and judgment as heautonomous legislates only to itself.

Historical investigations can be pursued for Kant on the empirical level, but without hope of arriving at general principles or even at definite knowledge in particular cases, again because the empirical origins of species are (in general) not things of which we can have sensible intuitions. Thus, as Kant puts it in “On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy,” historical investi-

gations of this sort can at most deliver “fragments or wavering hypotheses” (AA, 8:161–162).<sup>19</sup> In the terms of that essay, the only “principle of specification” countenanced for philosophy is the purposiveness of nature as a principle for the “description,” rather than the “history,” of nature.

The *Critique of Judgment*, like the other two critiques, thus places limits on the mind: it shows us that history is an empirical undertaking and that it is therefore excluded from philosophy. Critique as a study of the boundaries of the faculties cannot, therefore, extend to historical inquiry about their origins—an inquiry which would in any case be foreign to what is mainly at issue, namely the validity of their use. As Kant puts it in the *Prolegomena*:

But how this peculiar property of our sensibility itself [that it knows only appearances] is possible, or that of our understanding and of the apperception which is necessarily its basis and that of all thinking, cannot be further analyzed or answered, because it is of them that we are in need for all our answers and for all our thinking about objects.<sup>20</sup>

And finally, the evolution of concepts in general is also excluded from critique: “I am concerned not with the evolution of concepts, like Tetens, but merely with their objective validity” (N, 4900). Each of Kant’s three great *Critiques* thus establishes an important limitation or bounding (*Begrenzung*) of the mind’s powers. The first *Critique* limits our knowledge to appearances; the second limits morality to the “purely formal” moral law; and the third limits philosophical study to “description” rather than history. Beyond these boundaries lie, respectively, things in themselves, concrete moral maxims or guidelines, and historical origins. As Sally Sedgwick (2012, 5–8) has argued for the early writings, so for the later: Hegel will attack all such Kantian dualisms.

Though their details and status are, like everything Kantian (or for that matter, philosophical), subjects for endless debate, the general outlines of these limitations are obvious to even the most jejune of readers. That Kant had jejune readers, and from early on, is evident from what happened in subsequent generations of German philosophers. As with children who are forbidden to watch television or with Adam and Eve, who were forbidden to eat one particular kind of fruit, what was placed beyond the limits of critique quickly became a matter of obsession.

The fascinating and complicated story of what happened to German philosophy after Kant is not my concern here, except insofar as it affects the direct relation between Kant and Hegel; it has been told elsewhere.<sup>21</sup> Suffice it to say

that obtaining knowledge of things in themselves, or denying that they are even there to be not-known; seeking concrete moral guidance; and turning to history for an explanation of the powers of the mind were central topics in the critical discussion of Kant as the eighteenth century ended and the nineteenth began. Hegel was obviously a major part of this, and I will key my treatment of his critical discussion of Kant to his views on these three limits.

## PROSPECTUS

In Chapter 1 of what follows, I will pursue the issue of the independence of Hegel's philosophical project from his critique of Kant and give the bare bones of an account which sees that project as, in important ways, entirely independent of Kant's—an account which I have stated, and argued for at length, elsewhere (*CW*). On this view, which is virtually the opposite of Soll's (1969), Hegel's philosophy and Kant's are independent of one another; indeed, even if Hegel's critique of Kant fails on every single point, his own project would be substantially unimpeached.

In Chapter 2, I will use this account to disentangle Hegel's criticisms of Kant's theoretical philosophy as regards the limit Kant places on cognition. This raises two interrelated issues in Kant: that of the things we cannot know and that of the power of knowing them, which we do not possess. I will thus discuss Hegel's views on things in themselves and on the enigmatic faculty of intellectual intuition, which for Kant would be how we would know things in themselves if we did know them.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss Hegel's concept of idealism, which will turn out to redirect philosophy's search for origins away from transcendental faculties and toward the history not of what we can know but of what we can say: toward the evolution of our basic words.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I will turn to the *Philosophy of Right* to see how moral philosophy can for Hegel yield concrete guidance in life. Chapter 4 will discuss the portions of the book relevant to Hegel's critique of Kantian moral and social theory in light of the view of Hegel's project as characterized in Chapter 1; in Chapter 5, I will disengage and organize the main components of that critique so that we can see it as the systematic whole that it is.

## CHAPTER 1

### HEGEL AND HIS PROJECT

TWO CENTURIES OF STRENUOUS EFFORT at understanding the nature of Hegel's philosophical project have generated two main families of views—one, indeed, for each century. Both are predicated on views of Hegel's relationship to Kant's critical project, but their stances on this are opposed: the older view sees Hegel as revoking Kant's critique of metaphysics, while the younger one, closer to mine, sees him as continuing it. My next tasks, then, are to sketch these two general understandings of Hegel, to show why they are defective, and to indicate with what they might be replaced. A general account of that replacement will occupy the rest of the chapter, with the specific payoffs concerning Hegel's critique of Kant reserved for the rest of the book.

That Hegel's "philosophical vision" differs from Kant's is obvious enough; even to a nonphilosophical eye, a page of Hegel does not look at all like a page of Kant, nor of anyone else, for that matter. What is not obvious, to say the least, is just what Hegel's way of doing philosophy amounts to. That it represents some kind of comprehensive philosophical system is clear just from the tables of contents of his major works; but what more can we say?

I will call this the "nature of philosophy problem" in Hegel. I have treated it at length elsewhere (CW) and will confine myself here to an updated sketch of the overall argument. My most general presupposition is that any proposed solution to the nature of philosophy problem in Hegel runs into trouble if it is (a) at variance with Hegel's own statements; (b) impeaches the overall unity of his thought; (c) employs problematic reading strategies; and/or (d) violates what I will call the "plausibility constraint."



These criteria deserve some preliminary comments, of which the first is that they are advanced only to serve as indications of problems with a proposed solution. They are not definitive, if only because overall accounts of Hegel's project (with some exceptions) are not subject to up-or-down judgments on their validity. Hegel interpretation is inherently pluralistic, and its major strands are all illuminating and worthy of continued pursuit. But none, including surely my own, is wholly right.

Criterion (a), in particular, furnishes indications of trouble, rather than trouble itself, because quotes from Hegel almost always have counter-quotes. Hegel was not only a voluminous writer with diverse interests but a supremely difficult one as well, many of whose texts have been heavily edited by others. The dialectical nature of his philosophy, moreover, repeatedly leads him to state contradictory views, often at some length, before subsuming them into some sort of speculative unity.<sup>1</sup>

It must also be said that Hegel is often—too often—devious. To take an example which will be important for my own view of Hegel (and *its* deficiencies), in the *Science of Logic* he refers to it as “the exposition [*Darstellung*] of God before the creation of nature and of finite Spirit” (5:44/50; emphasis removed). This single line has been cited innumerable times as a warrant for various “theological” readings of Hegel.<sup>2</sup> But it cannot serve as that, for it turns out to be an unattributed citation from Spinoza's *On the Improvement of the Intellect*.<sup>3</sup> Spinoza refers to the presentation of the thoughts of God before the creation of the world as a thought-experiment for a philosophical project; but it is not something that could actually be carried out because for Spinoza—as well, *prima facie*, for the Hegel who quotes him—the very idea is counterfactual. The God who *is* nature (*deus sive natura*) cannot have created nature.<sup>4</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that in the next paragraph—in a passage quoted rarely, if ever, together with the first—Hegel slips in a retraction, while ostensibly talking about Anaxagoras: “What we are dealing with in logic is not a thinking *about* something which exists independently as a basis for our thinking and apart from it; . . . on the contrary, the forms and self-determinations of thought are the content and ultimate truth itself” (5:44/50).

On this basis, Hegel's logic would not be the “exposition” of God but God himself—and Hegel turns into a self-deifying maniac, unless we know enough Spinoza to uncover the hidden reference to him in the earlier quote and realize that it cannot have been intended literally. Then we see that Hegel is not maniacal but devious: he is trying to invoke God for his philosophical project while

covertly signaling, both in the invocation itself and immediately after, that the invocation is hollow. The deviousness can readily be explained if we surmise that Hegel was, philosophically anyway, not a traditional theist and wanted to cover his tracks. Atheism was broadly defined at the time; it was repeatedly confused with another departure from orthodoxy, pantheism, in the *Pantheismusstreit* of the late eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> It was also unpopular with German authorities; thirteen years before the first edition of the *Science of Logic*, Fichte had been fired from his position at Jena for espousing what they considered to be atheism.<sup>6</sup> Hegel, who still did not have an academic position when he was writing the *Science of Logic*, would hardly want to endanger his chances of getting one.

This is not the only occasion on which Hegel was devious in such ways. The lesson, from this as well as the other problems with his writing that I have noted, is that isolated quotes must be used with care.

Criterion (b) will be clear enough when I deploy it, as long as we keep in mind that the unity in question is not over time: on the view I will advocate here, Hegel's thought changes in important ways over the course of his life, but in its final expression it is a single, unified philosophical system.

Criterion (c), the avoidance of problematic reading strategies, requires slightly more detailed preliminary comment. The two standard families of solutions to the nature of philosophy problem in Hegel, simply because they give such prominence to Kant, show themselves to be *deuteroi ploi* ("secondary sailings") in that instead of going directly to Hegel's texts to understand his philosophical project, they use a selected group of other texts to understand the ones he actually wrote and published. This is tempting, of course, in virtue of the obscurity, difficulty, and trickiness of Hegel's texts; you cannot simply sit down with them and hope to get anywhere. It is therefore entirely reasonable to go to more readily comprehensible texts and thinkers, such as Kant, and then read Hegel as either criticizing or carrying forward their insights. But this inevitably risks reading foreign notions into Hegel rather than developing one's understanding of him from his own texts. Depending on which other texts are selected, this approach can ramify into a whole panoply of reading strategies.

Finally, criterion (d), which I will call the "plausibility constraint," requires that any account we give of Hegel's way of doing philosophy should not only be grounded in Hegel's texts but should also be plausible enough to make Hegel's project worth pursuing. Introducing this constraint on a solution to the nature of philosophy problem in Hegel raises ancient, profound, and complex

issues concerning the nature of philosophical interpretation itself. Should we strive for the most accurate statement possible of Hegel's views on philosophical plausibility, no matter how ridiculous they appear to us? Or should we try to reshape his thought into something acceptable by our current lights? The former suggests that we should try to jump over our own shadow, eliminating all traces of ourselves and our culture from our interpretation; but if all traces of ourselves are gone, why should we hope that the results will be useful to us? The latter implies that we and our kind constitute a court of final instance before which Hegel must bow—and if he must bow, so must all others but ourselves. Trapped between the Scylla of antiquarianism and the Charybdis of arrogance, our only recourse here seems to be to feel our way into the middle, hoping for some sort of Gadamerian “merging of horizons” to broaden us while reshaping him.<sup>8</sup>

I will take a slightly more determinate middle way, arguing that both families of Hegel interpretation fail both types of plausibility constraint: they do not yield accounts of Hegel's project that Hegel himself would likely have thought worth pursuing, and some of what they yield is implausible to us.

### HEGEL AS A REVOCATION OF KANT

The first family of solutions to the nature of philosophy problem in Hegel holds that Hegel is restoring metaphysics after Kant's critique of it.<sup>9</sup> What these views have in common is that they all take Hegel to purport, like his pre-Kantian predecessors, to inform us about fundamental things which we cannot experience, such as God, the soul, and freedom of the will—what Kant called “things in themselves” or noumena. Such views of Hegel were originally propounded by some of his own students<sup>10</sup> and have remained traditional. According to this family of views, Hegel aims to produce a philosophical system of the kind brought forth by such philosophers as Aquinas, Leibniz, and Spinoza; the different members of this family of interpretations represent different choices as to which of these predecessors the interpreter thinks is the most important. We thus get Hegel presenting us, as Frederick Beiser (1993) puts it, with “inverted Spinozism,” “dialectical neo-Thomism,” or “monistic Leibnizianism.” These approaches, in Beiser's words, take Hegel's metaphysics as a “fait accompli” (2); his philosophy in general rests upon, and so restores, some version of metaphysics after its Kantian critique. It therefore amounts to a revocation of that critique.

The metaphysics thus restored, however, cannot be exactly the metaphysics which Kant attacked. For one thing, it was evident during Hegel's lifetime that he was not doing metaphysics in any sort of traditional way. Metaphysics has always been a matter of argument, while Hegel's mature writings move along from section to section and from volume to volume without so much as a "therefore." Moreover, when Kant characterizes metaphysics as claiming knowledge of a supersensible realm, he is viewing it in terms of a dualism so intense that he eventually had to write the whole *Critique of Judgment* to overcome it. Such a view is profoundly uncongenial to Hegel's monistic instincts, which means that for him metaphysics and reality—thought and being—are somehow one from the start. As Dieter Henrich has unpacked this view, "it belongs among Hegel's most fundamental convictions that the conceptual form of thinking does not only arrive at reality, but that it enables and even constitutes reality. In this way *the world is only the self-unfolding of logical form*."<sup>11</sup>

One might think that this approach would lead to a lot of works comparing Hegel's thought to that of Aquinas, Leibniz, or Spinoza, and it has;<sup>12</sup> but in fact scholars need not go so far afield. One of Kant's ablest successors in German philosophy, Schelling, attempted a restoration of metaphysics on an intuitive basis after Kant's critique of it. Hegel's early allegiance to Schelling was strong and is evident throughout his writings up to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Thus, this approach encourages the reading strategy of explaining Hegel's view by focusing not on previous philosophers but on Hegel's own presystematic, deeply Schellingian writings.<sup>13</sup>

This family of views, like the other family (which I will discuss in the next section), runs into serious problems. First, in line with (a) above, there are specific indications in Hegel's texts that he does not view his philosophy as a restoration of metaphysics. Second, it violates the unity of Hegel's thought by separating theoretical and practical reasoning. Third, it depends on questionable reading strategies. Fourth, and most seriously of all, it fails the plausibility constraint in both senses.

The first indication of trouble for this family of views is the large number of unkind things Hegel says about pre-Kantian metaphysics. To be sure, arguments from quotes are never definitive, and there is no shortage of passages where Hegel endorses metaphysics. But that is only what we should expect: given his views on the nature of refutation, which I noted in the Introduction, his philosophy should contain metaphysics as a subordinate moment (as he often says; see 5:61/63–64; *Enz.* § 24 and *Zus.*, 114 *Anm.*; etc.).

Just how it does this will be clarified shortly. For the moment, whatever Hegel says about metaphysics as he has comprehended it, the number and intensity of his negative comments on the “older” (or pre-Kantian) metaphysics remain impressive. It was “no free and objective thought” (*Enz.* § 31 *Zus.*), for example, and exhibited a “tendency to substance” (20:122–123)—a characterization which is not only unkind but hostile from the man who, in the preface to his first published book, proclaimed himself to be trying to “grasp the true not as substance but equally as subject” (3:23/10). More indicative still is Hegel’s dismissal of the philosophical efforts of many of his own contemporaries because “seen in the light, [they] are nothing more than the procedure of the older metaphysics, an uncritical thinking on and on, as is given to anyone” (*Enz.* § 41 *Zus.* 1). If Hegel is criticizing his contemporaries for pursuing “uncritical,” that is, pre-Kantian, metaphysics, how can he think he is doing the same?

Calling pre-Kantian metaphysics the “point of view of the understanding on the objects of reason,” as Hegel also does (*Enz.* § 27), is hardly an invitation to it: Hegel is accusing metaphysics in general of ignoring the Kantian distinction between reason and the understanding, thereby separating the objects of metaphysics—God, the immortal soul, and the like—from our minds and supposing them to exist in their own right. To go on, as Hegel does, and say that metaphysics retains any contemporary presence at all only because of this wholly mistaken undertaking is to say that it is intellectually dead.

It was, Hegel tells us, Kant who “finished off” the old metaphysics of the understanding because of its “objective dogmatism” (*hat der Verstandesmetaphysik, als einem objektiven Dogmatismus, ein Ende gemacht*; 20:333). But if Kant finished it off, he was not the first to attack it: modern skepticism and empiricism were the “downfall” (*Untergang*) of at least the metaphysics of Spinoza, Locke, and Leibniz (20:70). Precritical metaphysics is not only dead but cannot be revived, or so Hegel suggests in a Berlin fragment:

The philosophy of spirit can be neither empirical nor metaphysical, but rather must examine the *concept* of mind [*Geist*] in its immanent, necessary development out of itself to a system of its activities. (11:524)

Pre-Kantian metaphysics, then, is dead because it was unfree, uncritical, tended to substance, absolutized the point of view of the understanding, and was objective in its dogmatism (as well as dogmatic in its objectivism). These complaints are not only numerous and intense but also consistent: they all

amount to the claim that metaphysics did not restrict itself to mind in its “immanent necessary development” but took as its standard accuracy to things which were assumed to exist outside us. It is easy to see in this that Hegel has accepted, not revoked, the main traits of Kant’s critique of metaphysics.

Second, attributing such a metaphysical or theological turn to Hegel also violates (b) above—the systematic unity of his thought. How can he come at Kant’s moral theory from the kind of concrete perspective that we associate with him, if he has landed both epistemologically and metaphysically in a conflation of God and the philosopher worthy of Plotinus? Can he somehow be going in both these directions at once?<sup>14</sup> If he is not, then what is he doing in his critiques of Kant’s theoretical and practical philosophy?

Third, if one thinks that Hegel is trying to philosophize in the manner of Aristotle, Aquinas, Spinoza, and the rest, one should go to their texts to understand his; and as I have noted—(c) above—such a reading strategy, though often helpful, always risks introducing foreign elements into his thought. More promising, and more common, is to use Hegel’s own earlier, Schellingian writings to explain the later texts; but this, too is problematic, because it often amounts to *obscurum per obscuriorum*. Hegel’s Frankfurt, Nuremberg, and Jena writings, including many sections of the *Phenomenology*, are notably confused. Preferring them to the later writings of his mature period is much like preferring the notebooks of a particularly brilliant graduate student to her later publications.

Moreover, this reading strategy also presupposes a dubiously unitarian view of Hegel’s thought over time. To say that Hegel’s philosophy incorporates, early and late, a Schellingian revocation of Kant’s critical philosophy ignores, for example, the *Phenomenology*’s criticisms of Schelling, which were strong enough to end their friendship and which constituted—as Schelling himself protested—a rejection of Hegel’s own previously Schellingian approach.<sup>15</sup> Nor is the turn from Schelling at the *Phenomenology*’s beginning its only philosophical swerve; a second and even more decisive one comes at its end, when Hegel moves from introducing the system to actually constructing it. Assuming continuity from the *Phenomenology* into the later works is thus to discount any differences between the “ladder” to the system (3:29/14) and the system itself.

A third change in the way Hegel presents his philosophy, still more consequential (at least for what is to follow), seems to occur around 1826. It is evident in the Hamann essay of 1828<sup>16</sup> and has to do with language. In the five and one-half pages of the preface to the first edition of the *Science of Logic*, from 1812, the word “Sprache” does not occur at all. In the fourteen-page preface to

the second edition, from 1831, it occurs eleven times; and given the omission of even the mention of language in the earlier text, some of what Hegel says there is rather startling. He makes four major points which are missing from his writings at least through the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

1. Thought determinations, which we saw earlier in the section are “the content and ultimate truth itself,” exist first of all in language:

The forms of thought are in the first instance set forth and laid down in the *language* of human beings. (5:20/31; emphasis in original)

2. Nothing in our minds is language-free:

In everything which comes in the human being to be something inward, a representation as such, what he makes his own, language has penetrated, and what he makes into language and expresses in it contains, concealed, or mixed up, or worked out, a category. (5:20/31)

3. Language not only captures individual thought determinations but also the “speculative” relations among them:

It is an advantage when a language expresses an abundance of logical expressions, that is, specific and determinate expressions for the thought determinations themselves; many prepositions and articles denote relationships based on thought. It is much more important that in a language the categories should appear in the form of substantives and verbs and thus be stamped with the form of objectivity. . . . In this respect German has many advantages over other modern languages; some of its words even possess the further peculiarity of having not only different but opposite meanings so that one cannot fail to recognize a speculative spirit of the language in them; it can delight a thinker to come across such words and to find the union of opposites naively shown in the dictionary as one word with opposite meanings, though this result of speculative thinking is nonsensical to the understanding. (5:20/32)

4. The job of logic is to reconstruct linguistic thought determinations:

Therefore logical science, in that it treats of the thought determinations which in general run through our mind instinctively and unconsciously—and even when they enter into language do not become objects of our attention—will also be a reconstruction of those which are singled out by reflection and are fixed by it as subjective forms external to the matter and import of the determinations of thought. (5:30/39–40)

It has long been standard, certainly in Europe, to say that after the *Phenomenology* Hegel turned, or returned, to metaphysics or even theology; here, however, we seem to have something more like a “linguistic turn.”<sup>17</sup> But if language is that important to Hegel in 1831, why is it wholly absent in 1812? If Hegel had believed, early in his philosophical life, what he says at the end of it—that all thought is conditioned by language and that it is the job of philosophy to reflect on language—we would expect him at least to mention it (unless, of course, he feared that identifying the primary concern of his philosophy as linguistic would encourage “atheistic” readings of it).

However that stands, the foregoing considerations cast serious doubt on reading strategies which presuppose unitarian views of Hegel’s thought. Such doubts cannot be laid to rest as Karl Ameriks (2000, 296) does—by basing his reading of Hegel on the earlier works and then finding parallel passages in the later ones—because of the general problems with quoting Hegel noted above; because as William Bristow (2007, 171) has noted, Hegel often uses words from earlier phases of his work to express ideas which have become very different; and because an overall change of project such as this may well have left many specific details unchanged. Only a thorough comparison of the early and later Hegels, in fact, could resolve them. Dean Moyar (2011) has presented such critical comparisons on numerous points having to do with Hegel’s view of conscience; but Hegel’s overall engagement with Kant, our topic here, is so broad that such comparison would require us to be in possession of an adequate understanding of the entire later Hegel, which is the very thing with whose absence this reading strategy is trying to cope.

As Hegel goes through life, then, he both modifies the nature of his philosophical project and, as he works it out, gets clearer on it; he may also, from the academic chair in Berlin which he occupied during his later years, have felt more confident about discussing its true nature. It is these considerations which have led me to focus here on Hegel’s later writings—those from the *Science of Logic* on. These writings come from a time when Hegel was not only clearer on the final nature of his project as a philosophical system, but was actually setting it down, rather than writing youthful preliminary sketches or exploring the “ladder” to it.

Finally, reading Hegel as a restoration of pre-Kantian ways of doing metaphysics fails the plausibility constraint in both the above senses. It would have us believe that he rejected one of the supreme philosophical achievements of his youth, Kant’s critique of metaphysics, without discussion or argument—for



he never offers any: for all his critical engagement with Kant, his writings never explicitly attack Kant's critique of metaphysics. It is inconceivable that any German of Hegel's generation who hoped to be taken seriously as a philosopher would simply ignore Kant on this issue, especially one who criticized him so extensively on other points, and Pippin (1989, 7) is surely right to say that "just attributing moderate philosophic intelligence to Hegel should at least make one hesitate before construing him as a post-Kantian philosopher with a precritical metaphysics."

The revocation-of-Kant approach also assigns to Hegel a project which, to many today, is not only implausible but philosophically abhorrent; for Hegelian metaphysics, however enthusiastically pursued for several generations after his death, has in the last couple been thoroughly discredited. The idea that logical conceptuality, however understood, somehow "constitutes" reality, which we have seen Henrich attribute to Hegel, is now little more than a joke. As Peter Steinberger (1985, 110–111) puts it, if Hegel's thought is a restoration of metaphysics, it "would best be viewed . . . as an obscure and rather odd collection of assertions worth considering only for antiquarian reasons."

## HEGEL AS A CONTINUATION OF KANT

If he is to be relevant at all in the twenty-first century, Hegel clearly needs to be rescued from metaphysics; the quotations above suggest he would welcome the rescue. This is where the other family of traditional views concerning the nature of his philosophy gains plausibility, for it suggests that he carried out the rescue himself—that his thought is not a revocation of Kantian transcendental philosophy but a continuation of it. According to this second family of solutions to the nature of philosophy problem, first formulated in the mid-twentieth century by Klaus Hartmann,<sup>18</sup> Hegel is extending the Kantian project of an *a priori* examination of the mind's faculties into a dialectical critique of our basic categories.

At one extreme of this family are those who believe that there is relatively little in Hegel's philosophy that does not arise, in fairly detailed ways, from his reading of Kant. Thus, Dieter Henrich (1983a, 17) writes that "Hegel's philosophical development to independence of thought was determined, more than by any other factor, by his reception of Kantian moral philosophy and philosophy of religion." This does not mean, however, that Hegel ended as a Kantian. As we saw, Henrich himself believes that Hegel ended more as a Schellingian, whose critical appropriation of Kant must then have constituted a stage in his develop-

ment, leading on to an ultimately Schellingian standpoint. But here (again) we come upon a rupture, for (as Henrich recognizes) Hegel's mature philosophy is not only post-Kantian but indeed anti-Kantian; it "contradicts all of Kant's doctrines concerning the organization and nature [*Verfassung*] of reason" (15).<sup>19</sup>

No one, then, thinks that Hegel was an undiluted follower of Kant. Continuing Kant's basic project does not preclude criticizing it in important and fundamental ways, and on this view Hegel, in good philosophical fashion, continued Kant by opposing him. There are so many ways to parse out the basic tension between continuing Kant's project and criticizing it that this view, like the other one, eventually becomes a family of views. Thus Terry Pinkard (introduction to Heine 2007, xxvi) suggests that Hegel, like other philosophers in Kant's wake, "wanted to use Kant to get beyond Kant," while Robert Pippin (1989, 6) suggests that Hegel's position does not so much criticize Kant as it "extends and deepens Kantian antiempiricist, antinaturalist, antirationalist strategies."

As with the other family of interpretations, the development of these approaches has been both fascinating and fruitful; but this family, too, has deficiencies. It runs against things Hegel actually says (criterion [a] above); separates reason from history, thus violating the unity of Hegel's mature thought (b); relies on problematic reading strategies (c); and fails the plausibility constraint, though not as badly as do metaphysical readings (d).

A preliminary indication that Hegel did not develop his own philosophy solely, or even largely, by critically appropriating Kant is that if he had done so, we might expect him to have read Kant carefully. But there is plenty of evidence that he did not. As Paul Guyer (1993, 204) points out with reference to Kant's theoretical philosophy, both Hegel's reading of Kant and his specific criticisms of him are actually quite loose:

Hegel wrote as if he had offered detailed refutations of Kant's central theses, but in fact he hardly engaged in internal criticism of Kant's arguments at all. Instead, he criticized Kant's conclusions from the point of view of his own suppositions about the bond between knowledge and reality.<sup>20</sup>

Karl Ameriks also complains about Hegel's "casual attitude to the texts," and Barbara Herman, editing John Rawls's *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, likewise comes up against Hegel's disrespect for them: "the careful reading of Kant would be sufficient," she writes, to rebut Hegel's criticisms.<sup>21</sup>

Hegel's carelessness poses a problem for us today, for it bespeaks a surprisingly low estimation of Kant; as Klaus Brinkmann (1994, 58) puts it, "Hegel's

disregard, even disrespect for Kant's Copernican revolution must strike any modern reader as extraordinary." How can such unusual disregard for Kant square not merely with the importance both families of conventional readings claim for Hegel's relation to Kant but with my own views on the importance of Kant to Hegel as stated at the beginning of this chapter?

Catherine Caillot-Thélène (1979) has pointed out that like other post-Kantian German philosophers of his time, Hegel distinguishes the letter of the Kantian philosophy from its spirit.<sup>22</sup> Kant was not usually a careful writer, as anyone who has wrestled with his German can attest and as Kant himself acknowledged by writing the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* two years after the *Critique of Pure Reason*, aimed at explaining the latter more clearly (AA, 4:261). Kant was also (it follows) occasionally sloppy as a thinker, leaving loose ends untied; one of these, on his own testimony, required him to write the entire *Critique of Judgment* (AA, 5:174–179). Hegel's dismissals of Kant's texts, then, do not entail a dismissal of his thought; and his disrespect for parts of that thought does not necessarily bespeak wholesale rejection. Still, Hegel's carefree procedures in reading Kant do suggest that Kant was, while important, not as important to him as to us.

A second kind of indication that Hegel is not continuing Kant's project in any simple way is furnished by his repeated claims not to be working in the Kantian tradition (criterion [a]). Rolf-Peter Horstmann (1999) has noted that where Fichte and Schelling see themselves as "completing" or "correcting" Kant, and thus as leaving the general framework of his philosophy intact, Hegel "never misses a chance to point out that Kant is in error from the very beginning, that there is no bridge between what Hegel, from early on, calls 'true philosophy' and a thinking which proceeds under Kantian presuppositions" (568; my translation).<sup>23</sup> Horstmann's view is supported by the textual dismissiveness we have already found in Hegel. If Hegel does not buy into Kant's philosophical project at all, then we cannot expect him to read Kant carefully, any more than we would expect a careful reading of Derrida from Quine. It is also supported by Robert Stern's (2008, 143) observation that from the preface to the *Phenomenology* on, it is for Hegel "fatal (and quite uncalled-for) to begin with anything like the Kantian 'instrument' model of cognition." If Hegel begins his significant philosophical publishing by so decisively rejecting Kant's view that appearances stand between us and things and so are (in Hegel's term) "instruments" for getting to know them, how can we call Hegel's philosophy a continuation of Kant's?

The continuation-of-Kant approach, like the previous one, is also founded on some problematic reading strategies (criterion [b]). Instead of turning to Hegel's own early writings to understand his philosophy as a whole, as the first family of readings tends to do, it subordinates them and turns to Kant. But to say that there is little or nothing in Hegel that does not come out of his appropriation of Kant is to downplay other influences on Hegel in favor of placing him within a self-enclosed "German philosophical tradition." On this view, Hegel's obvious differences with Kant remain within the framework of a unitarian view, now extended not merely to Hegel's own thought but to the entire development of German philosophy from 1781 to 1832. Thus, while Henrich recognizes, as we saw, that Hegel's mature system "contradicts all of Kant's doctrines concerning the organization and nature of reason," he still goes right on to claim that Hegel was still "in the continuity of the movement departing from Kant."<sup>24</sup>

Can Hegel's place in a unified German philosophical tradition be maintained in the face of the important breaks between Kant and Hegel to which Horstmann and Stern refer? Is it not possible that at least some of those breaks can be filled in by reading Hegel with (limited) appeal to philosophers outside the "German tradition"?

Though precise measurements are impossible, the influence of Greek philosophy on Hegel may well exceed that of Kant. Even at the time of Hegel's first studies of Kant while a student at Tübingen, writes Henry Harris (1993, 27), "the Greeks . . . came first." Allen Wood (1993, 211) writes that "Hegel's philosophy is an attempt to renew classical philosophy, especially the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, within the philosophical tradition begun with Kant."<sup>25</sup> Emil Fackenheim (1967, xii) puts it still more trenchantly: "Hegel's philosophy shatters the context of German idealism. It is as much a response to Aristotle and Spinoza as to Kant, Fichte, and Schelling."

One of Hegel's major claims for his own philosophy, beginning with the *Phenomenology* (for which it is basic), is that all other philosophical viewpoints will coincide with it once they have clarified their terms and corrected their inadequacies. Kant's viewpoint, to be sure, is one of these; but so are those of Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, and the rest. Thus, Tom Rockmore (1986, 142–154) has argued that Descartes, not Kant, is Hegel's main epistemological foil, while Hegel himself, in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, identifies Spinoza, not Kant, as the "high point of modern philosophy" (20:163). Kant, by contrast, is said (in the *Science of Logic*) to be "the foundation and beginning point of recent German philosophy" (5:59n/61n; emphasis added).

The substantive problem here is that in order to philosophize in the Kantian tradition, you need some concept of a priori knowledge.<sup>26</sup> Kant's critique of metaphysics, for example, is founded on his claim (in the first sentence of the first *Critique*) that all our knowledge comes from experience. Such a claim cannot itself be established by experience, since we cannot experience "all knowledge," so it must for Kant be an a priori claim. If there is no such thing as a priori knowledge, then, Kant's critique of metaphysics never gets going. Views of Hegel which see him as continuing Kant's transcendental project must therefore preserve the Kantian view that philosophical knowledge is a priori knowledge. They then take Hegel's system to be some sort of deduction or construction of the categories of thought which proceeds without relation to our experience of the world. Certainly Hegel's many statements about the immanence of the development of his philosophy, one of which we saw in the Berlin fragment quoted previously, support this.

Kant's a priori realm was, however, prudently thin, containing basically the twelve categories plus a handful of "ideas of reason." Hegel's systematic expansion of it is, by comparison, gross to the point of hubris. It contains, as Pippin (1989) notes, things like "elective affinities," "the constitution of things out of matters," "the solicitation of force," "the chemical process," and even "man." As Pippin continues:

So many such concepts are clearly as they are because the world is as it is, and cannot be considered categorical results of thought's pure self-determination, that Hegel's project cries out for a more explicit, clear-cut account when and why we should regard our fundamental ways of taking things to be "due" wholly to us, in the relevant Hegelian sense. (258)<sup>27</sup>

Hegel's a priori realm is already far too concrete for credibility—and most of Pippin's examples here are solely from Hegel's writings on logic. What are we to make of it when Hegel's "deduction of the categories" goes on to produce mollusks and cephalopods, mesmerism, and contract law? Indeed, Hegel himself is clearly aware that his categories do not come from pure thought alone, because as Michael Petry has shown, he wrote the various sections of the *Encyclopedia* only after extensive reading on the science of his day.<sup>28</sup>

By remaining with a Kantian notion of the a priori, this approach also violates the unity of Hegel's system in that it separates reason from concrete affairs such as ethics and history (criterion [c]). If Hegel is critically constructing the basic categories of all thought, how can he have important things to say about

passing but urgent issues such as the English reform bill (11:83–128/234–270) or the many concrete considerations to be found in the *Philosophy of Right*?

Kant's philosophy, to be sure, has plenty of concrete bite: the *Metaphysics of Morals* shows this throughout. But Hegel's philosophy is still much more concrete than Kant's, and Hegel was aware of this; as we will see, he criticizes Kant over and over for his "empty formalism" and abstractness. He believed, then, that he had found a principled way to get beyond such emptiness. But what can that way have been? Attributing a Kantian concept of the a priori to Hegel precludes an answer, for the a priori is precisely what is entirely independent of all things empirical.

Finally, this family of views, like the previous one, thus fails both forms of the plausibility constraint (criterion [d]). It strains credulity that Hegel could have thought that Kant's thin a priori domain of categories and ideas could be expanded to the 573 different sections of Hegel's presentation of his system in the *Encyclopedia*, which itself is (according to the book's title) only an "outline" (*Grundriß*) of the entire system. Nor can a sensible philosopher of the present day greet such a notion without a chuckle, however rueful.

### A THIRD READING

Both viewing Hegel as a revocation of Kant and viewing him as a continuation of Kant thus, for all their respective strengths, encounter problems. They run against specific indications Hegel himself gives; they separate philosophical reason from history, thus violating the systematic unity of Hegel's mature thought; they employ, at crucial points, suspect reading strategies; and they fail both forms of the plausibility constraint when it comes to a priori knowledge. If we want to understand Hegel's criticisms of Kant in the *Philosophy of Right* and elsewhere in terms of Hegel's own thought, we have no choice but to begin by figuring out *quodammodo de novo* what that thought consists in and how it is supposed to work. The result is a third reading of Hegel, which is not intended to supplant the other two (no such final verdict is possible with Hegel) but to take its place beside them and illuminate his critique of Kant.

If Hegel's views on such matters were easy to ascertain, however, the *deuteroplous* of using other writers (or his own young self) to understand him would not be as tempting as it is; and if those views turned out to be not only ascertainable but by some miracle plausible, Anglophone writers on Hegel would see no need to cut his social and political thought away from its footing in Hegel's logic and philosophy of nature.

As Horstmann (1999, 578) points out, Hegel presented his views on the nature of philosophy mainly in “exoteric” parts of his writings—prefaces and lectures to a general public; one result of this, it should be noted, is an extreme (and, I have suggested, devious) deference to religion in Hegel’s presentations of the nature of “scientific” philosophy. In the face of this, I have elsewhere (CW) proposed to read Hegel’s system in terms of certain relevant passages from his *Encyclopedia* itself, together with other later writings.

Those relevant passages begin with the *Encyclopedia*’s discussion of “The Object” (§§ 194–212), which deals with the “realization” of the concept in objectivity (§ 193) and which immediately follows the presentation of the concept’s subjective structures—concept, judgment, and syllogism (§§ 163–193). Cues within those passages, when supplemented with the more detailed discussions in the *Science of Logic*, allow the *Encyclopedia*’s account of “Representation” (§§ 451–464) to be identified as containing a discussion of the philosophical media of such realization. This section culminates in a discussion of language, and so the media in question turn out to be linguistic. Hegel’s immanence claims for his philosophy then mean that philosophical discourse takes place not only in and as but also “about” language. This locates him as the first major philosopher to have made what Richard Rorty (1967, 3) calls the “linguistic turn”: he believes that all philosophical problems are problems of language and that they can be solved either by reforming language or by better understanding how it works.

Hegel himself, to be sure, never puts it that way. But in addition to passages such as the ones I cited earlier from the preface to the 1831 *Science of Logic*, he does say things such as the following, from the “With What Must Science Begin?” section of that work:

Whatever is intended to be pronounced or implied about being in the richer forms of representing the absolute or God, is in the beginning [of philosophical science] only an empty word and only being. (5:79/78)

If the components of the system are in the beginning mere “empty words,” and if the system is to move from such empty words to “richer forms of representing” which are no longer empty, then it is reasonable to conclude that the development of Hegel’s systematic thought amounts to the reflective bestowal of meanings on empty words—or as he says here, on “being,” the first and thus emptiest word of his system. The reflective bestowal of meaning on a term is expressed in its definition, and the logical reconstruction of a thought deter-

mination is thus intended to bestow upon it what Hegel calls a “verified definition” (*Enz.* § 99 *Zus.*). Such bestowed definitions, then, are what Hegel’s system is “about.” They are what logic deals with when, as Hegel said in the comment on Anaxagoras I quoted previously, it is not a thinking “about” something different from it.

If Hegel’s system is to present us with an *immanent* development of meaning, such a definition can only be formed by recombining terms already defined in the system; hence, it is one whose content “is not accepted merely as something that we come across but is recognized as grounded in free thinking, and hence as grounded in itself” (*Enz.* § 99 *Zus.*) This kind of immanence, then, is what Hegel meant by talking, in the Berlin passage I also quoted earlier, about the “immanent, necessary development [of Spirit] out of itself to a system of its activities” (11:524).

Defining terms is a systematically constructive enterprise, for when I provide a definition for a term, I link it to a set of other terms—its definiens. The immanence that Hegel claims for his system means, on this basis, that each of the terms in the definiens is similarly linked to a set of terms which define it, all of which have in their turn been defined within the system—all the way back to the first term, “being,” whose systematic “definition” is, unsurprisingly, “nothing.”<sup>29</sup> In this way, what Hegel constructs is a “definitional system,” and I will refer to this as the “definitionalist” reading of Hegel.

Definitional systems are not wholly unknown to logicians, but as Richard J. Wolfson (1990, 15) points out, they have “normally served as . . . adjunct[s] to a formalized scientific theory, which is to say, a theory expressed as a formalized axiomatic system in a formalized language.” If we think that the business of philosophy, and indeed of the human mind in general, is to produce theories which are composed of statements which inform us about the world (and so are “true”), definitions can only be what Whitehead and Russell (1925, 1:11) called them: “mere typographical conveniences.” This is not Hegel’s view; in Chapter 4 we will see him begin the *Philosophy of Right* by arguing the contrary (*PhR* § 2).

This is not the place for a thorough discussion of definitional systems, but I will note two distinctive features of Hegel’s. First, his system, like Wolfson’s, stands alone. It is not an adjunct to any scientific theory but is intended to provide “verified definitions” for the terms which are used in such theories, showing how those terms cohere with each other and with the larger human world.



Moreover, Hegel does not accept, for philosophical purposes, the standard view that a definition states necessary and sufficient conditions for applying a predicate to a thing. Consider the first definition in Wolfson's system:

"x is part of y" = df. "everything that overlaps x overlaps y."

"Overlaps" is for Wolfson a primitive term applied to any two entities when they have a part in common. Apart from the circularity here, which Wolfson argues is merely semantic, Hegel would see this as burdened with far too many presuppositions to do philosophical work. What sort of thing are "x" and "y"? What is "everything"? Put more generally, this type of definition presupposes that there is something "out there" which is to be captured in the definition (in this case, the relation of part and whole). Like Kant, Hegel calls this sort of presupposition "metaphysical"<sup>30</sup> and says that it "would entail the hovering [*vorschweben*] of a substrate of representation" before the mind (*Enz.* § 85). Such definitions are therefore cases of "thinking *about* something" and so not part of philosophy.<sup>31</sup>

Hegel's system is thus a single, linear exploration of what Robert Brandom (2002, 194–195) calls "sense-dependence." Because Hegel, in the immanent construction of his system, dispenses with even the emptiest of substrates, his thought determinations are entirely defined by their place in the system—by their coming before and after certain other terms. On this level, the system thus exhibits what Brandom calls "strong individuation holism": a term's incompatibility with other terms is sufficient for its meaning, or "determinate content" (183). It incorporates this, however, not as a philosophical position but as a philosophical practice.<sup>32</sup> Hegel's system is not "modally robust" in Brandom's sense (192) because the incompatibilities and so the impossibilities it establishes are ones that it has itself generated.

This way of reading Hegel thus does not do much to lighten the burden of understanding his convoluted texts; but, as I will claim shortly, it satisfies the four criteria I have adduced at least as well as members of the two families I have mentioned. It also has, as I have argued in *The Company of Words*, several other advantages over competing interpretations:

1. Since each new definition is formed entirely out of previous moments of the system, it captures the immanence of Hegel's philosophy. "Metaphysical" in Kant is, as I have already noted, contrasted with "transcendental"; in Hegel, the contrast is with "immanent," which captures the system's rejection of "hovering substrates," determinate or indetermi-

- nate.<sup>33</sup> Thought develops out of itself in such a way as to converge with the definitions of terms developed from experience, and the implausible claim that Hegel's system is *a priori* in some transcendently Kantian sense—that it is wholly independent of experience—is thus avoided.<sup>34</sup>
2. Since each term is defined by and helps to define all the others, this reading captures the system's "necessity" in Hegel's sense, that is, as the inner identity of those different moments.<sup>35</sup> Since identities for Hegel are fluid—in his jargon, they always contain difference—this avoids the implausible claim that Hegel's system is an account of something that is "necessary" in the more familiar sense that it cannot be other than it is. It is crucial to the definitional reading, and to the contemporary plausibility of Hegel's system, that it be radically open to revision.<sup>36</sup>
  3. Because it is an entirely immanent development, the system has universal validity in the relatively weak sense that it can be grasped by any human being who has followed it from the beginning. Implausible claims that Hegel, who was supremely conscious of his own rootedness in history,<sup>37</sup> thought he had given an account of reality whose details all human beings must accept for all time are thus avoided.
  4. Hegel's famous doctrine of "the identity of thought and being," which seems to many to make his philosophy a highly implausible hyperrationalism in which the totality of its moments somehow actually constitutes everything real,<sup>38</sup> is linguistically mediated. As we will see in Chapter 3, it amounts to the claim that nothing has "being" for someone rooted in history until it can be spoken of—or, as Wittgenstein (1961, 115) would put it, "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world."
  5. As a set of definitions, the system is linguistic and so, most basically, is a series of utterances which, as sounds, die away in time. It is therefore dynamic from the start. This answers Adolf Trendelenburg's 1840 question, which so exercised Kierkegaard: how does movement come into the logic?<sup>39</sup> It doesn't come into it; it is there from the start.
  6. The system, though immanent and necessary on its own terms, is written in the *sounds* of words from Hegel's time and place—nineteenth-century German—and so captures, or as Hegel would say "comprehends," that language and its culture. Systematic comprehension occurs most completely when each term in the standard definition of a German term corresponds to a term already defined in the system, so that the

two definitions sound the same. Comprehending a German term—say *Ursache*, or “cause”—thus locates it within a “verified” context of other terms. When we call something a “cause,” for example, we are committing ourselves to certain views about relations in general, necessity, contingency, and the like. The entire point of Hegel’s system, then, is to clarify and regularize those relations. Hegel is thus saved from the implausible claim that he has philosophically comprehended everything whatever.

Finally, the definitionalist reading of Hegel satisfies the four criteria of success I identified earlier in the following ways and to the following degrees:

- a. It is supported, as we have seen (and as I argue in greater detail in *The Company of Words*), by many things Hegel actually says. The things he says which run steadily counter to it are for the most part either claims about God or other deployments of religious rhetoric. These, for better or worse, must be read as I earlier read his statement about logic as the “presentation of God”: as devious smoke screens designed to throw the authorities off the trail. Philosophically, at least, Hegel was no theist; he took religion with the utmost seriousness, but only as a human phenomenon.
- b. The reading does not violate the systematic unity of Hegel’s thought. Hegel’s logic is not a sudden turn to some divine or transcendental realm over and above history and ethics but simply gives the definitions of the basic terms which will be used to define terms in those fields.
- c. It does not use any other philosopher as a touchstone for understanding Hegel, not even the younger, Schellingian Hegel; it is developed entirely out of Hegel’s mature texts.
- d. Finally, Hegel’s project is not only plausible but strangely humble. It is an attempt to produce an immanent series of defined words—what I elsewhere have called a “company of words.” Though this leads Hegel into some very strange locutions, it is formally uncomplicated; the only basic rule of systematic dialectic is to make definitional use of no term which has not itself already been defined. It is neither tendentious, nor silly, nor useless. Hegel is seeking to come up with a set of terms whose “verified definitions” show the interrelations among our basic concepts and can serve as a common basis for communication in a variety of fields.

## TWO NONMETAPHYSICAL READINGS

The definitional reading stands with the continuation-of-Kant readings in that it frees Hegel from the absurdities that come with construing him as some sort of pre-Kantian metaphysician. It can count as a further development of that family of readings in that it provides solutions to three problems that remain for Hegel on the continuation-of-Kant reading, at least as Robert Pippin pursues it.

First, Pippin (1989, 35–39) recurs to the way Hegel explains what he means by the concept (*Begriff*) by using the Kantian doctrine of the transcendental unity of apperception. The concept, like the transcendental unity of apperception, is a self-aware pure unity which covers all conscious contents or is what Hegel calls “pure self-consciousness” (6:253/583). But Pippin does not note that while Hegel thus appropriates the transcendental unity of apperception, he gives its activity a speculative, rather than a transcendental, character. The concept does not merely connect or “synthesize” conscious contents, as it does for Kant, but “comprehends” (*begreift*) them; and this consists

in nothing else than that the ego makes [such content] *its own*, pervades it and brings it into *its own form*, that is, into the *universality* that is immediately a *determinateness* that is immediately universality. As intuited or even in ordinary conception [*Vorstellung*], the object is still something *external* and *alien*. When it is comprehended, the being-in-and-for-itself which it possesses in intuition and pictorial thought [*Vorstellen*] is transformed into a *positedness*; the *I* in thinking it pervades it. But it is *only* as it is in thought that the object is truly *in and for itself*; in intuition or ordinary conception [*Vorstellung*] it is only an *Appearance*. (6:255/585)

Where Kantian synthesis connects different contents with each other, Hegelian comprehension transforms them in themselves. Full understanding of this passage, whose main themes are repeated at *Enz.* § 42 *Zus.* 1, will come only in Chapter 3, when I discuss Hegel’s views of *Erinnerung*; for the moment, I make two very general notes.

In the first place, the transcendental unity of apperception, in William Bristow’s (2007, 10 n.15) words, includes “being conscious of [an] experience (or [a] representation) *as one’s own thought*.” For Kant, representations and experiences belong to us from the start; that is the result of his arguments about space and time as pure forms of intuition and so as subjective. But for Hegel, we see, they have to be *made* our own; we must take possession of them via the activity of internalizing and universalizing that I will call “inwardization.” In the second

place, this activity of inwardizing externally perceived contents is the kind of thing carried out, for Hegel, by language. Already in the *Phenomenology*, speech has the “divine” character (3:92/66) of converting (*verkehren*) the individual referent into a universal, that is, into something completely different; and this will loom larger in the later works.

As I noted above, Pippin’s interpretation has a problem, as he recognizes, with the concrete nature of the contents Hegel comes up with in his system. Hegel’s view of comprehension as transformation enables us to see how this problem is solved. Concepts such as those of mollusk and mesmerism do not belong to the immutable equipment of the human mind but derive from experience—which means, for Hegel, that they come into his system via redefinitions of German terms, which themselves incorporate the transforming activity of thought. When the world, or our understanding of it, changes, the language also changes; and the system can be redeployed to capture the changes.

Second, this reading shows how Hegel can solve a problem that Kant solved with pure intuition. As Pippin (1989, 8–9) states it,

Kant believed that there are any number of “logically possible” ways to “unify a manifold synthetically.” . . . The only way of distinguishing between the logically possible and the *a priori* “really possible” was by reliance on intuition, or in the case of *a priori* knowledge, of “pure intuitions.”<sup>40</sup>

For Hegel, the set of “logically possible syntheses” would be the set of possible ways of combining terms already defined so as to reach the verified definition of a new term. As Pippin suggests, Hegel has to narrow that down. He has no faculty of pure intuition to do so; but he does have the “intuition of the word” (*Enz.* §§ 461, 465, 572), a German sound which conveys a meaning. The contents which are not merely logically possible for the system but really capable of finding a place within it are those which contribute to the definition of a term from German.

The German language, through its relevant words, thus directs the development of the system. Though each of the system’s definitions contains only terms that have previously been defined and in that sense is “immanently” developed from them, just which terms are actually chosen to produce a new definiens depends on what words the German language presents as in need of philosophical comprehension. The German language, worked up by countless speakers over millennia, thus stands before Hegelian thought as a *Faktum*, a challenge to its comprehensive capacities. (The same, of course, would be true of Spanish if

Hegel had been a Spaniard, or of Cantonese if he had been from Guangzhou.) It is to meet this challenge that systematic thought must, from all that is “logically” possible for it at a given stage, select what it will make “real” in its next definition. German words thus provide, for Hegel, what John McDowell calls the “friction” between thought and the world (see McDowell 1994, 18). The rubbing, however, is linguistic. Hegel does not seek to comprehend experience itself but the words in which others—politicians, poets, religious leaders, and above all empirical scientists—have done so: “the *Faktum* of philosophy is cognition already prepared.”<sup>41</sup> The specific modes and procedures of such preparation are up to those who conduct it, for human experience itself is too contingent and variegated to be susceptible of philosophical definition—let alone of the kind of global discussion it receives in Kant (and McDowell).

Third, Pippin’s careful reconstruction of the development of Hegel’s logic shows that Hegel deploys a wide variety of tactics which cannot be brought under a single unitary concept of negation. For Pippin (1989, 255) this presents a problem, because the system as transcendental is supposed to be a single internally generated sweep of thought; the kinds of ad hoc dodges to which Hegel resorts impeach this unity. The solution, Pippin concludes, is that this kind of unity is not necessary for Hegel’s logic.<sup>42</sup> The definitionalist reading shows why: philosophical thought is not the development of anything. Whatever gets you from one stage to the next is allowed as long as it does not bring in any undefined terms. As Richard Dien Winfield (1988, 130) has carefully argued, the immanence claim is all the “method” Hegel has.<sup>43</sup>

The present account of Hegel’s philosophical project, fleshing out Pippin’s insight as regards the transcendental unity of apperception with Hegel’s views on language, will be the basis of my efforts here.

## PROJECT AND CRITICISMS

The definitionalist reading, I will argue in the following chapters, helps us understand the texts in which Hegel criticizes Kant in a variety of ways. Two of its contributions, however, are general enough to deserve discussion here.

Philosophy is, according to legend anyway, a collection of arguments. If Hegel remains throughout his life within basically Kantian parameters, or within the parameters of a unified German tradition begun by Kant and continued by Fichte, Schelling, and the younger Hegel, or indeed within the parameters of all philosophy up to Hegel, then his philosophy must be some sort

of giant deduction. If so, Hegel's deduction would be unusual in that it aspires, in Neuhausser's (2000, 2) terms, "to articulate the basic structure of rational thought in general and to grasp the underlying character of all that is real." Neuhausser's phrasing captures the core of both traditional families of views of Hegel and shows us what they have in common: the idea that the aim of Hegel's thought is to *inform* us about something other than itself—either about the nature of "rational thought in general," à la Kant, or about the "underlying character of all that is real," à la Schelling and the early Hegel.

But are these not hovering substrates? Hegel's system certainly does not *look* like a chain of arguments. For one thing, on this view all the moments of Hegel's system—all the propositions it is supposed to contain—are explicitly identified by him as failures; otherwise the system would not move forward from them. The steps in a deduction, of course, are supposed to be true. How to incorporate falsehood into a deductive system? Wood's answer serves for many: by reading Hegel's dialectic as a series of *reductios*. For Hegel, "a thought determination is what it is because it is determined (or limited) in a definite way. But each such thought has an inherent tendency to push beyond its limit and turn into its opposite resulting in a contradiction."<sup>44</sup> This reading of the dialectical nature of Hegel's thought, which is very common, does not sound deductivist, but it is: it makes Hegel's system into a series of *reductios* in which "S is P" is assumed and then shown to imply its contradiction. The difference between this and usual *reductios* is that for Hegel this "implication" is not merely one which we draw; "S is P" itself somehow has an "inherent tendency" to "turn into its opposite." That, according to Wood, follows from its nature as a "thought determination" (as opposed to something philosophically more familiar, such as a sentence or a proposition).

But where does this inherent tendency come from? Trendelenburg's question spreads its wings: how does movement come into the logic? Moreover, how can a set of contradictions be the "foundation" of anything? More logically put: how can a set of contradictions *not* be the "foundation" of anything, anything whatsoever?<sup>45</sup> In standard logic, anything can be deduced from a contradiction, and if we read Hegel this way, we must indeed judge his system to be not merely implausible but, in words that Wood (1990, 5) applies to Hegel's logic, a "final and irredeemable" failure.<sup>46</sup>

On a definitionalist reading, as I have shown elsewhere (CW, 161–163), contradiction derives from complementarity: for a newly introduced term *t*, all the rest of the system up to that point complements it and can be designated as

“not- $t$ ,”  $t$ . Contradiction in Hegel’s specific sense arises when both  $t$  and  $\bar{t}$  are asserted to be, or posited as, essential to something else: “It is thus the contradiction that, in positing identity with itself by excluding the negative, it makes itself into the negative of what it excludes from itself, that is it makes itself into its opposite” (6:65/432). “It” here is the “positive.” Hegel is saying that when we take, for example, the north (positive) pole of a magnet as the basic reality or “essence” of the entire magnet, the south pole is excluded as a mere ancilla to it. But because the positive can only be defined in terms of its opposition to the negative, the existence of the south pole is necessary for the north pole and “contradicts” the essence-claim of that pole.

Contradiction is thus a specific stage or moment of the system for Hegel, and he nowhere identifies contradiction as the driving force of the entirety.<sup>47</sup> While at 6:74/439 he makes the infamous claim that “all things are contradictory in themselves,” he is talking there about what you get if you express the notion of contradiction in a proposition, which as we have seen is not how the system expresses it. The whole discussion, moreover, is bound to Hegel’s concept of essence; things (*Dinge*) are contradictory because they have essences, and an essence, as we learn from Aristotle (see McCumber 1999, 29–31), both is and is not the thing of which it is the essence.

Worries about Hegel’s use of contradiction are thus disarmed by the definitionalist reading. Also disarmed is the worry that Hegel’s system deductively constrains its later parts—the underlying worry which leads Hardimon, Neu-houser, and Wood to cut Hegel’s social and political philosophy away from the logic entirely and provide different premises for it. On the definitionalist reading, earlier parts of the system—including both the logic and the philosophy of nature—are necessary for understanding its later parts, including the *Philosophy of Right*; but they do not constrain those later parts the way a deductive foundation would. Earlier moments of the system do not dictate what later moments must be like but provide a set of words in which they may be defined. If that doesn’t work—if no subset of the previously defined terms can be deployed to capture the definition of a term important in the culture of Hegel’s time and place—then that previous set can be revised to make it happen.<sup>48</sup>

If we measure the “complexity”  $\zeta$  of a term by the number of items contained in its definition, we see that Hegel’s system moves from simple to complex very quickly. This is because “contained” is a transitive relation. If five terms are needed to define  $t$ , then we can say that  $\zeta(t) = 5$ . But if each of those terms is defined by four further terms, then  $\zeta(\zeta(t)) = 20$ , and so on.<sup>49</sup> Thus, at each stage



Hegel has a great deal of latitude as to which of the previously defined terms to use in his current redefinition of the relevant German word.

This has, as will be seen, a crucial implication for Hegel's critique of Kant's moral theory. If the conclusion of a deduction is false, then the conjunction of its premises cannot be true. If Hegel's system is a deductive one, then if we can derive a contradiction from proposition (or "thought determination") 34 of the system (whatever that is), then propositions 1–33 cannot all be true. This holds, moreover, for all the thought determinations of Hegel's system, including determination 2 ("nothing")—which means that the system begins with a falsehood, in the form of a contradiction latent in its very first moment, being. It is indeed a "final and irredeemable failure."

On a definitionalist reading, by contrast, a given definition may fail in that it does not in fact comprehend the German term it is supposed to capture, without the earlier contents being impeached at all; perhaps Hegel simply chose the wrong set of previously defined terms to formulate his new definition. In that case, the derivation of an invalidity does not show that there is any problem with what has been done previously.<sup>50</sup>

One thing that Hegel clearly does with Kant's moral theory, as we will see, is make it a stage of his system ("Morality"). He then goes on from morality to formulate the structures of "ethical life." On a deductivist reading, the mere fact that Hegel does this must mean that the structures of morality themselves, and so of Kant's moral theory, must somehow be flawed. On a definitionalist reading, this does not follow. It is thus possible that Hegel entirely accepts Kantian morality, not exactly as a "special case" (as David Couzins Hoy [1989, 211] suggests) but as a stretch of the system wrongly disjoined from what went before and what will come after. When Hegel moves on from the basically Kantian standpoint he calls "morality" to the richer terrain of "ethical life," the structures of morality need not be in any way impeached; they can remain just as they are.<sup>51</sup>

This brings us to a second, and broader, implication of the definitionalist reading for understanding Hegel's criticisms of Kant: on its important levels, Hegelian philosophical critique criticizes other approaches, not for containing falsehoods or fallacies in any of the usual senses, but for not beginning where Hegel does, not proceeding as he does, and not continuing on as he does. *Its ultimate standard for critique is thus itself.* While Hegel does indeed advance more standard forms of philosophical criticism on occasion, his usual complaint about other philosophers is that they are not Hegel. Hegel's *Aufhebungen* of previous philosophies thus consist mainly in taking something originally

proffered as a complete philosophy (or as the basic principle of a complete philosophy), restating it as an “inner sequence of development,” and placing it at the appropriate location within the overall development of the system. As Hoy (1989, 211) puts it, in Hegelian *Aufhebung* views “are criticized for their limitations,” that is, not for their falsehood or possible falsehood, and are then “embedded in a more inclusive philosophy.”

This, then, is the final reason why we cannot understand Hegel’s various criticisms of Kant without contextualizing them in his overall philosophical project: the criticisms are not made merely from the standpoint of that project, as Guyer, Smith, and many others have noted, but in its name. What connects (most of) Hegel’s many criticisms into a unified critique is not some set of general premises embedded in his system but the system itself.

In what follows, I will use this reading of Hegel, together with these two crucial insights, to understand his later criticisms of Kant. I will first examine the two major (and interrelated) “epistemological” disagreements between the two: Hegel’s rejection of the unknowability Kant attributes to the thing in itself and his apparent acceptance of intellectual intuition. Then I will discuss their major “ontological” disagreement, as conveyed in Hegel’s views on idealism and on Kant’s version of it. I will argue that in every case, construing Hegel as a “definitional” philosopher enables us to articulate philosophically plausible accounts of Hegel’s views on Kant.

Turning in Chapter 4 to practical philosophy, I will present a definitionalist reading of the relevant sections in the *Philosophy of Right*, focusing on the account of “morality” (which Hegel identifies as the Kantian moral stance) and then continuing the pursuit into the discussion of marriage in “ethical life.” In Chapter 5, in the light of this, I will examine eight major charges that Hegel makes against Kant’s moral theory—not all of them explicitly.

Finally, a brief note on texts. Hegel’s systematic thinking begins with the *Science of Logic* and includes the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* and the *Philosophy of Right*; these, together with the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—which somehow constitutes the “introduction” to the system—are the only books Hegel actually published during his lifetime, and I will use earlier works only to illuminate them. His later lectures on fine art, world history, the philosophy of religion, and the history of philosophy are also important sources but are the product of heavy editing and must be used with care. It is with care, then, that I will use them; but what they express is Hegel’s mature thinking, and I will not abstain from them as rigorously as I do from the earlier works.



## CHAPTER 2

# HEGEL CONTRA KANT ON PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE AND THE LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE

KANT'S EPISTEMOLOGY AND HIS ONTOLOGY are difficult enough to disentangle that one wonders if these two separate titles should be applied to him at all. Certainly a single doctrine lies at the core of his approach in both areas: that we can know only appearances, while things in themselves—beings as they may, possibly, exist independent of the mind and in particular of the mind's faculty of intuition—remain wholly noncognizable. The epistemological implications of this view are obvious, but it also underpins Kant's "transcendental idealism." Because space is a form of pure intuition given as outside us, things ordered in space are also given as outside us and therefore given as empirically real—but space itself is an "ideal" effect of our faculty of intuition (*CPR* B, 274–279).

In order to get clear on Hegel's criticisms of Kant's "theoretical" philosophy, then—what I am calling his epistemology and ontology—we need to get clear on what Hegel thinks of the distinction between appearances and things in themselves and of Kant's relegation of knowledge to the former sphere. But Hegel's critique of Kant's theoretical philosophy is not confined to these specific issues alone. He also has some generalized doubts about the nature and possibility of the critical project itself. I will begin here by discussing them—briefly—because they show, in a relatively clear way, some basic critical strategies that Hegel will use again. For both sets of issues, we need some basic Kant.

## KANTIAN COMMONPLACES

The relevant account of Kant can remain basic because Hegel's Kant, as we will see throughout, is painted with a broad brush. As I noted in Chapter 1, Hegel does not think the letter of Kant's system is expressed carefully enough to reveal its spirit in technical detail, and while his criticisms of Kant are not usually based on biased or superficial readings, they also do not show zealous pursuit of meaning and argument.<sup>1</sup> If there is an inference somewhere in Kant's corpus that, understood with proper subtlety, can save Kant from one of Hegel's criticisms, Hegel either is not going to search it out or, finding it, will not appreciate it. It is not really Kant who interests Hegel, in fact, but what we may call Kant's formalistic philosophy; and though Kant was the founder of the formalistic approach, and in some ways unsurpassed as a practitioner of it, he was not for Hegel its clearest or most thorough (*konsequent*) exponent. Hence, some basic Kant is sufficient for understanding Hegel's criticisms of him. If Hegel's criticisms of Kant are to gain the day, this basic Kant should also be uncontroversial, but as I noted in the Introduction, such issues go beyond the scope of the present project.

The most comprehensive question of theoretical philosophy for Kant is "What can I know?"<sup>2</sup> His canonical answer is "appearances," which include the ordinary furniture of our lives and the objects of natural science. Kant's restriction of knowledge to appearances brings us before two dichotomies, the first of which is sensible/nonsensible. All our knowledge for Kant requires empirical input via sensory intuition, so appearances, in order to be objects of knowledge, must be sensible or "empirical." Nonsensible things, if there are any, cannot be known. The other relevant dichotomy is mind dependent / mind independent. Sensory intuition for Kant is not passive apprehension but an operation of the mind which places the still rawer data of the sensory "manifold" under the pure forms of space and time and so makes intuitions of it. Intuitions are thus mind dependent, in form at least, and are strictly speaking not known; they are intuited. In order to yield knowable appearances, the intuitive deliverances of sensibility must be organized according to the categories of the understanding.

If what I can know are "appearances," then, what I can know is for Kant both empirical and, in part at least, mind dependent (see *CPR* B, 33–34). But specifying this also raises for him the contrasting and treacherous question of what I *cannot* know. The obvious answer is simple: what I cannot know is what is (a) non-empirical, (b) mind independent, or (c) both.

Of these three possible species of the unknowable, Kant excludes (b), that is, mind independent but empirical. The sensory manifold, which is given *to* us and so might in certain ways qualify as mind independent, does not contain distinct entities. These are first found at the stage of intuition; and intuitions, as we have seen, are already results of the operation of mind. Every empirical object is, therefore, to some extent dependent on mind, and “all that I am conscious of directly is what is in me” (*CPR* B, xxxix n).

There may possibly, however, be entities, or aspects of entities,<sup>3</sup> which are (c) mind independent and *non*-empirical. Kant’s term of art for these is “things in themselves.” Things in themselves would be external to the mind, therefore independent of its activities, therefore non-empirical, and therefore, finally, wholly unknowable. Their philosophical role, we learn from the preface to the first *Critique*’s second edition, would be as the realities of which the appearances we know are appearances (see *CPR* B, xxvii).

The second sort of unknowable entities which Kant allows would be entities which are (a) non-empirical but mind dependent. One way of being mind dependent is to be rationally ordered (*CPR* B, 390–396). Since non-empirical objects are by definition not given by the senses, they receive no content from outside the mind. Any order which they exhibit in our thought can only come from the mind’s own ordering activity, which means (by Kantian definition) that it comes from the faculty of reason (see *CPR* B, 362–363). There being no sensible component to these non-empirical objects, they have no existence or properties apart from the rational order into which the mind puts them, and so, in being rationally ordered by the mind, they are rationally produced by it. They exist, in the “intellectual world,” as “ideas of reason” such as God, the soul, and immortality (*CPR* B, 384–386, 391–394; see *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, AA, 4:451–463). These are in turn the founding concepts of Kantian moral theory, with the “noumenon” (or transcendental “idea of reason”) of freedom playing that role directly (to be moral *is* to be free) and other ideas such as those of God and the soul playing it indirectly (*CPR* B, 826–828).

Kant uses “noumenon” for both types of non-empirical entity, but he explicitly distinguishes the two senses of the term at *CPR* B, 307–312. In the negative sense, “noumenon” is the same as “thing in itself” (*CPR* B, 308): a completely empty term designating something which is mind independent and so lies beyond the sensory realm. In order to know such a thing, we would need some sort of non-empirical intuition—an “intellectual intuition”

(CPR B, 308), which would, however, be an intuition of a noumenon in a “positive sense” (CPR B, 307, 311–312).<sup>4</sup> Even without such intuition, however, we can *think* such “positive” noumena in that we produce the ideas of them rationally, as we do the ideas of God, the soul, immortality, and freedom. Ideas of reason are thus non-empirical entities which cannot be known, for they have no sensory component; but they can be thought. (Because thought produces them, it is misleading, though better English, to say that they can be thought *about*.)

Hegel has criticisms to make of both the negative thing in itself and of the positive rational ideas; his treatments of them are entirely separate. In what follows, then, it will be convenient to refer to noumena in the negative sense as “things in themselves” and to reserve the term “noumena” for ideas of reason insofar as they are objects of theoretical rather than practical philosophy. Noumena in this sense are rationally produced and ordered but have no intuitive content and, not standing under intuition’s pure form of time, are atemporal. Kant’s “critical philosophy,” aiming to ground morality in such noumena, thus does not break with metaphysics’ traditional project of providing atemporal foundations for practical activity. As Theodor Adorno put it in the twentieth century, Kant “wishes to salvage the timeless, absolutely valid experience of independent truth. . . . The *Critique of Pure Reason* is in general a supreme attempt to salvage ontology on a subjectivist basis.”<sup>5</sup>

## SWIMMING WITHOUT WATER

Hegel’s problems with the overall nature of Kant’s project begin with the mysterious charge that Kant wants to learn to swim without getting into the water. This, Hegel says, amounts to

the misunderstanding of wanting to know [*Erkennen*] before knowing or of not wanting to go into the water before we have learned to swim. Certainly the forms of thinking must not be used without investigation; but this process of investigation is itself a knowing. So the activity of the forms of thinking, and the critique of them, must be united within the process of knowing. The forms of thinking must be considered in and for themselves; they are the object and the activity of the object itself; they investigate themselves, [and] they must determine their own limits and point out their own defects. This is the same activity of thinking that will soon be taken into particular consideration under the name of “dialectic”; and we can only remark here, in a preliminary way, that it is not

brought to bear on the thought determinations from outside; on the contrary, it must be considered as dwelling within them. (*Enz.* § 41 *Zus.* 1)

It is quite natural to read this as saying that the “forms of thought,” including the Kantian categories, must be observed in their concrete use: that we should begin from actual cases of knowing the world (what Hegel here calls “das unbefangene Denken,” or “uninhibited” thought), and then conduct our critique of the categories retrospectively, as it were.<sup>6</sup>

The *Phenomenology* then looks like an attempt to supply such a retrospective account, in which thought determinations are retrieved from history. This has formed part of the standard readings of that book at least since Marx, for whom it constituted the core of Hegel’s idealism.<sup>7</sup> But Kant’s attempt to give an account of the forms of thought without taking into account how they are actually used in everyday cognition cannot be a problem for Hegel, certainly on the definitional reading, because he does that too. As I argued in the previous chapter, the sole criterion for any Hegelian philosophical definition is that of immanence: all the terms in the definiens must themselves already be defined within the system. Whether or not the resulting definition captures anything that actually happens outside the system, be that qualifiable as cognition or not, is, as Hegel tells us at *RPh* § 2, a subsequent matter.<sup>8</sup> The “activity” of the forms of thought that Hegel recognizes in the quote above from *Enz.* § 41 *Zus.* 1 is thus not their use by us in our cognition of objects but their immanent function as placeholders, and place makers, within the definitional system. This is the activity by which they “show their own limits and point out their own defects,” neither of which is a matter of ordinary cognition. Hegel, in other words, has reformulated Kant’s critical question about knowledge in linguistic terms: it is not “What can I know?” but “What am I able to say?” He then answers this not with an overall preliminary account of language but word by word, so that our basic words “determine their own limits and point out their own defects.”

What, then, is the problem? Kant has abstracted away from our experience of the world in his theoretical philosophy, looking only to the mind itself and, as Hegel has put it a few sentences earlier, purportedly “examining the faculty of cognition before cognition begins.” But “cognizing before cognition” is itself, of course, a form of cognition. If it proceeds without reference to our knowledge of the world, then it must proceed by examining the mind itself—that is, as introspection. Hegel is thus criticizing Kant not for ignoring concrete cognition in his critical account of knowledge but for basing that account



on what is supposed to be a special kind of knowledge: “cognition before cognition,” or what I will call critical introspection.

The problem Hegel sees with this special conception of introspection is that it is *not special enough* to do the job it needs to do for Kant. We can see this by attending to a regress which it is supposed to block. Let us take it that (1) all cognition is in need of critique and (2) critique is a form of cognition. In virtue of (1), critique is in as much need of critique as was everyday cognition (*unbefangenes Denken*) itself; so we need a second level of critical knowledge. But in virtue of (2), this second level is also cognition, so it too will need critique, and so on. The only ways in which Kant can block this regress are either to deny (2), claiming that critique is not cognition at all, or to deny (1), claiming that its deliverances are not themselves in need of critique—that they are certain. Though Kant does not discuss the issue of the nature and status of critical knowledge, it is clear—to Hegel, at least—that Kant regards it as a sort of knowledge. And so he must block the regress by claiming certainty for its basis, the deliverances of introspection. Critical introspection is thus special because its deliverances are certain enough to ground philosophy, that is to say, absolutely certain. The names “Descartes” and “Husserl” remind us that Kant was neither the first nor the last philosopher to claim this.

That critical introspection is not for Hegel special in this way can be seen from his further complaints, according to which it seems that it is used to establish two sorts of things.<sup>9</sup> One of these is specific truths about various features of our minds, in which case critical introspection is used to warrant statements such as “Reciprocity is not an empirical concept but a pure concept of the understanding (i.e., a category).” Hegel, oddly, phrases his claim that Kant relies on introspection in constructing his system by saying that Kant’s procedure is “empirical”; Kant builds his system by “going to work in a psychological manner, that is, historically” (*geht nun psychologisch zu Werke, d.h. geschichtlich*; 20:339). Deployed in this way, Kantian critical introspection is for Hegel not a unique kind of cognition but merely part of a larger “psychologistic” procedure that draws not only from introspection but also from “public” phenomena such as history and contemporary science (such as, perhaps, psychology). Thus, for example, for Kant the forms of judgment as Aristotle had them (*CPR* B, 105) furnish a preliminary “clue” to the categories, which establishes what they are: “The way he arrives at these [categories] is from experience, from formal logic, according to which there are different kinds of rational syllogisms. Kant [subsequently] derives the Ideas from forms of the syllogism” (20:353; see also *Enz.* §§ 42, 60 *Zus.*).

Introspection, as the experiencing of our own minds, thus cannot be distinguished from the taking up of psychological and historical data, which means that it shares the problem that such data have if taken as the foundation for philosophy. That problem, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, is that they are infected with contingency. The givens of introspection—what Hegel calls the “facts of consciousness”—are, like the deliverances of history and psychology, changeable and thus uncertain.<sup>10</sup> The result, as we will see, is arbitrariness and randomness in deciding what they are. Kant’s appeal to “knowing before knowing” means that his philosophy never gets onto a properly transcendental footing.<sup>11</sup>

This initial loss of transcendental footing goes on to infect the rest of Kant’s philosophy. Shortly before the quote just given, Hegel says that “if the infinite is to be known, it should be determined; for that, [Kantian] Reason has only the forms of thought we call categories” (20:353). Kant’s initial psychologistic appeal to formal (Aristotelian) logic to establish the categories thus infects the entire subsequent development of his account of reason.<sup>12</sup>

Once we have absorbed the idea that Hegel thinks Kant derives his account of the forms of thought from introspection, history, and the science of his day, we can easily take the view that Hegel thinks they are for Kant “subjective,” not in the sense that their necessity and universality are rooted in the knowing subject but in the sense that they are not the same for all thinking beings—that they hold merely for us humans, or indeed for a post-Aristotelian subset of us. There is no evidence that Hegel held such a view of Kant, and William Bristow (2007, 38–41) shows the problems with it. The real issue is that the truths delivered by “knowing before knowing” do not hold for *any* of us in the way that they need to if philosophy is to appeal to them.

The other thing supposedly accepted by Kant introspectively, and so without adequate warrant, appears to be a general conception of what knowledge is; examining “the faculty of knowledge before knowing begins” includes for Kant investing knowledge from the start with the characteristics of universality and necessity (*Enz.* § 40 and *Anm.*). This very purity is presupposed, Hegel says, by the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and it amounts to the presupposition of a pure subject: the Kantian subject simply is, in the first instance, the source of universality and necessity in cognition (20:333; see also *Enz.* §§ 40, 41). Even “objectivity,” Hegel says, is defined by Kant so as to belong to the subject in this way; what is “objective” in his sense is a cognition on which the subject has bestowed universality and necessity (*Enz.* 41 *Zus.* 2).

Kant invokes critical introspection because he needs to investigate the forms of thought transcendently, which means without looking at how they are actually used in cognition; yet he does make use of them precisely by developing his philosophy “empirically”—by drawing on actual cases of cognition, including such things as the general introspective certainty that knowledge itself is universal and necessary. Kant himself actually refers to these two procedures, at § 4 of the *Prolegomena*:

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* I have gone to work [*bin ich synthetisch zu Werke gegangen*] on this question synthetically, namely in that I conducted an investigation into pure reason itself. . . . [It is] a system which takes nothing as a foundation except reason itself, and which therefore seeks without relying on any fact (*Faktum*), to develop cognition from its original germs. . . . Prolegomena, however, are supposed to be preparatory exercises. . . . They must therefore rely upon something which is already known to be trustworthy, from which one can proceed with confidence and ascend to the sources, with which one is not yet acquainted. (AA, 4:274–275)<sup>13</sup>

Seen in this perspective, Hegel’s complaints about “psychologism”<sup>14</sup> amount to the charge that Kant never actually wrote a critique of *pure* reason at all—that even the *Critique of Pure Reason* is really only a “prolegomenon”—while his complaint about Kant’s having presupposed the subject suggests that what Kant called a “critique of pure reason” actually began, in Hegel’s view, with an uncritical presupposition of subjective purity.<sup>15</sup>

Things are a bit more complicated than this, however. If Kant’s account of the categories was skewed by his uncritical acceptance of Aristotle, and if Kant’s account of reason is developed on the basis of those categories, then we should expect Hegel to criticize Kant’s account of reason. But here we encounter a surprise: Kant’s loss of transcendental footing has not caused so much as a stumble, and his account of the ideas of reason is in fact accurate: “[Kant] describes reason very well, but does this in a thoughtless, empirical way, which robs it again of its truth” (20:333).

How can one describe something “very well,” yet “rob it of its truth”? Let’s argue backwards: If Kant gets the content of reason correctly, must he not have gotten the categories correctly? For as we have just seen, it is by way of them that his “description” of reason proceeds. It seems, then, that Hegel thinks Kant got his list of categories right—that we do indeed have these twelve and no others—and Kant’s momentary reliance on Aristotle brought him no lasting

harm. The problem is not with the content of Kant's doctrine of the mind at all, but with the way it was arrived at.

We can sort this out in the following way. First, Kant was right to look away from concrete experience and ground the forms of thought strictly on the activity of thinking. Hegel himself, after all, does as much in the immanent development of his system; I noted in Chapter 1 how Robert Pippin's account of Hegel shows that he begins, precisely, from Kant's *transcendental* unity of apperception (though conceived, I argued, speculatively rather than transcendently). Hegel's complaint about Kant's "psychologism" is then that having begun in this way, Kant immediately appeals to introspection, conjures up necessity and universality for cognition, and from there moves forward in an arbitrary, "psychological" way (20:351–352). Hegel's criticism of Kant's epistemological project thus has two targets: how Kant begins and how he moves on from that beginning.

The problem with Kant's beginning is that universality and necessity cannot be established by mere appeals to introspection. Indeed, at the beginning of philosophy (for Hegel) we do not even know what universality and necessity are; they are mere empty words. Like all other forms of thought (*Denkbestimmungen*), they need to be introduced and critically scrutinized in their proper place (in the *Logic*, 6:200–217/541–553, 274–279/601–605). In presupposing at the very outset of his system that universality and necessity are characteristics of knowledge, Kant is thus using terms that have not been given systematic definitions (as Hegel puts it, "what is true in and for itself" [20:333] about them has not been investigated). This may not be a philosophical infraction for Kant, who famously said that definitions should come at the end of philosophizing, not at the beginning (*CPR* B, 758–759); but it is for Hegel.

Trying to learn to swim before you get into the water is thus not, for Hegel, trying to lay a foundation for all knowledge from a position outside knowledge. Kant did not have such a project and Hegel knows it; otherwise he would not be criticizing Kant for relying on a supposedly special kind of knowledge, namely introspection. Rather, trying to swim without getting into the water means thinking you know what philosophical knowledge is before you start doing philosophy. In Kant's case, this means attributing to philosophical knowledge the characteristics of universality and necessity he views as intrinsic to knowledge in general. Pinning critical investigation from the start to an overall concept of "knowledge" exempts that concept of knowledge itself from critique, as William Bristow (2007, 100, 204–205, and *passim*) has shown.

Subtracting universality and necessity from the Kantian subject thus means *radicalizing* critique. What remains after that subtraction is what should have been Kant's starting point: something with no determinate characteristics at all, except the pure capacity of thought to develop itself, dialectically, into a full system—the capacity for what Bristow (2007, 218–230) calls self-transformation, or for what I have called the bestowal of meaning on empty word sounds. A self can only be “transformed” and meanings developed over time; and Kant's critique, presupposing certain deliverances of introspection which are then exempt from criticism, ultimately aims at exempting the subject itself from time. Adorno, then, was right: Kant's undertaking is an effort to salvage timeless, absolute truth for philosophy and thus to perpetuate metaphysics on a subjectivistic basis.

But why did Kant begin by attributing universality and necessity to cognition? Because he needs to move on. Since he does not employ (Hegelian) dialectics in the construction of his system, Kant does not know how to get beyond a purely empty starting point; his account of the categorical imperative, to be discussed in Chapter 5, will show this in a particular case. Here we can say that if Kant had known how to get beyond such emptiness, he could have made his beginning concept of cognition as empty as it should be. But he did not. Beginning with thought that is the “source” of universality and necessity, he had to assign those qualities to it in preeminent degree, resulting in the Kantian conception of the subject. The critical philosophy must therefore exempt the basic structures of that subject from critique and thereby becomes a “subjective dogmatism” (20:333).

As we saw, however, Kant's philosophy does not lose its transcendental footing entirely. Rather, the various forms of thought Kant comes up with (categories, ideas of reason, and the like) have the kind of dialectical, definitional interrelations that they will exhibit in Hegel's system; that is what Hegel means when he says Kant “describes reason very well.” But Kant does not know this or pursue it; that is what Hegel means when he says Kant “robs reason of its truth.” Kant remains, in fact, unconcerned with content altogether and wants to determine cognitive status only “formally,” that is, with respect only to issues of objectivity and subjectivity (*Enz.* § 41 *Zus.* 2). He fills the resulting emptiness in his account of the mind with psychologistic appeals that get him where he wants to go. They are, in the final analysis, unnecessary for his project—though, in Hegel's view, they do make it easier. On Hegel's view, Kant should have proceeded as Hegel himself does: entirely immanently. He could then have begun as Hegel does: with self-transformative emptiness.

## HEGEL ON THINGS IN THEMSELVES

The differences between things in themselves (entities considered as unaffected by the human mind) and noumena (non-empirical entities rationally ordered) are often difficult to make out in Kant's texts, but Hegel treats the two kinds of unknowables separately. He is more importantly concerned with the nature and status of noumena; but Kant's account of the nature and status of things in themselves also comes in for criticism. The issues regarding the latter are simpler than those connected with the former, and I will treat them first.

Things in themselves are non-empirical entities which lie somehow beyond or behind appearances; insofar as Kant is concerned with them, it is because they are the mind-independent realities that sensory appearances are appearances of. Since things in themselves cannot be known, the concept of a thing in itself is for Kant "wholly indeterminate" (CPR B, 307). Hegel agrees: "The thing in itself . . . expresses the object, insofar as abstraction is made of all that it is for consciousness. . . . It is easy to see what is left: namely, what is completely abstract, or totally empty" (*Enz.* § 44 *Anm.*).

The way we arrive at this empty conception is important for both thinkers—and reveals that in Kant's hands, it is not quite empty enough. For Kant, our cognitive use of the categories is with respect to sensory intuitions; we form the concept of a thing in itself philosophically by "abstracting" (*abstrahieren*), "omitting" (*weglassen*), "separating off" (*absondern*), or "removing" (*wegnehmen*) all reference to intuition (CPR B, 300–307). What remains after this activity of abstraction is merely a specific form of thought itself, namely the manner in which it determines an object "for" the manifold of a sensible intuition when that manifold itself is not present—that is, the abstract manner in which we apply categories to intuitions without regard to whatever content they may have (CPR B, 309) or, as Kant calls it in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, an *Etwas überhaupt*, a thing as such (CPR A, 252).

A thing in itself is determinable by the categories but not actually determined; it is an unknowable but possible entity which may give rise first to sensory appearances, when it is concretely given in sensibility and the pure forms of intuition are applied to it, and then to objects, when the categories of the understanding are applied to the resulting intuitions. The abstracting activity of the mind is thus necessary to arrive at the concept of a thing in itself, but that activity is not completed: it does not deny to that (possible) thing whatever it is that might make categories applicable to it. If it did, then the thing in itself would not be thinkable as the external "source" of sensible content.

For Hegel, at *Enz.* § 44 *Anm.*, the abstracting activity by which we arrive at the idea of the thing in itself is a tacit use by Kant of his category of negation, according to which a sensation has a degree of magnitude, or, as we might say, of intensity (*CPR* B, 182–183). By the abstractions, omissions, separations, and removals which lead us to the concept of the thing in itself, we reduce that magnitude to zero—and this reductive activity itself is the category of negation. This use of the category of negation is for Hegel not only tacit but inconsistent, in that as we have seen, it is not carried all the way. The resulting thing in itself is not, in fact, wholly without properties; it is, as Kant himself admitted, a *thing* in itself and has a wholly indeterminate self-identity, the “form of thought” necessary for it to be determinable by the categories: “Hence the categories do extend further than sensible intuition, insofar as they think objects as such without taking account of the special way (viz., sensibility) in which they may be given” (*CPR* B, 309).

The “form of thought” which Kant says remains to the thing in itself is the abstract activity of the mind itself (*CPR* B, 309). We thus, for Hegel, arrive at the idea of a wholly empty yet in principle determinable thing in itself by making the mind’s own abstract self-identity into an object. So conceived, the thing in itself is not really unknowable; indeed, everything in it can be known perfectly, since there is nothing in it. The thing in itself is therefore, Hegel concludes, the easiest of all things to know (*Enz.* § 44 *Anm.*).

Hegel may not be right that the act of abstracting from intuition exemplifies the Kantian category of negation—certainly Kant does not call it that. But his criticism does not rest on that identification. Nor is it merely an isolated observation. It exemplifies three strategies which we will see him use against Kant on other occasions.

First, he gives a sort of intellectual genesis of the concept of the thing in itself, one which competes with Kant’s own. For both of them, we arrive at the concept of the thing in itself by removing, or abstracting from, everything in our experiences of objects of which we can become conscious. The difference is that for Kant we find, at the end of the process, that “there does still remain the form of thought” (*CPR* B, 309). For Hegel we do not merely find that form of thought but introduce it, by applying the empty self-identity of the I to the wholly indeterminate entity in which the abstraction, carried to the end, has resulted. Kant’s genetic account of the thing in itself was thus incomplete. Hegel’s completion of it, supplementing Kantian abstraction with the application of self-identity, has shown, in Hegel’s words, that the thing in itself is “only the product of thinking” (*Enz.* § 44 *Anm.*; emphasis altered).

Second, Hegel claims that Kant does this in order to reunite two realms which he has separated by a gap so large as to seem unbridgeable. This is the gap between empirical appearances and the mind-independent entities whose appearances they are. Kant throws his bridge by assigning to the thing in itself on the farther shore the one property which enables it to be thought of as the external correlate of a sensory manifold for which an (empirical) object can be determined: abstract identity.

The third strategy is one we have seen before: Hegel claims that by introducing the notion of abstract identity, Kant does not keep to the level of abstraction he has attained and needs to maintain—just as his introduction of universality and necessity into the concept of cognition, as we saw in the preceding section, means for Hegel that he does not keep to the level of transcendental his notion of critique requires.

These three general criticisms—that Kant gives incomplete intellectual geneeses, tries to bridge unbridgeable gaps, and backs down from his abstractions—will arise again in the context of moral theory in Chapter 5, and I will discuss them more fully there. For the moment, we have a different question: if we remove even empty abstract identity from the thing in itself, as Hegel seems to want to do, what are we left with? Something which has no identity at all, it appears, and which cannot affect us in any intelligible way. It is therefore something that neither can nor need be spoken of; as another famous German-speaking philosopher would put it a century later, *wovon mann nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen* (Wittgenstein 1961, 150).

This final step was taken, Hegel claims in the *Science of Logic*, not by Kant himself but by the more *konsequent* (thorough and consistent) forms of transcendental idealism which followed him:

Transcendental idealism in its more consistent development recognized the nothingness of the spectral thing-in-itself left over by the Kantian philosophy, this abstract shadow divorced from all content, and intended to destroy it completely. . . . But this attempt, because it proceeded from a subjective standpoint, could not be brought to a successful conclusion. Later this standpoint was abandoned. (5:41/47)

By idealism that has set out to “destroy” the thing in itself, Hegel presumably means Fichte. Fichte had managed the destruction by taking the practical dimension as basic to the cognitive: “The concept of action . . . is the only one which unifies the two worlds which are there for us, the sensible and the intel-



lectual. What opposes my action . . . is the sensible, [and] what should come to be through my action is the intelligible world" (1975, 47).

The sensible world is here defined entirely as that which opposes my action, and in that sense it is "posited" by, or grounded in, that action itself, rather than in a thing in itself which is supposed to exist independently of me. In this way, the empirical realm loses all independent significance; from Fichte's moral point of view, empirical objects are merely centers of resistance to moral action. In that such action seeks to overcome this resistance, it aims at the "complete destruction" of the thing in itself.

Further along in the *Science of Logic*, in a passage important enough to be quoted at length, Hegel tells us that

[with] the thing-in-itself thus presupposed as the indeterminate, all determination falls outside it into an alien reflection to which it is indifferent. For *transcendental idealism* this external reflection is *consciousness*. Since this philosophical system places every determinateness of things both as regards form and content in consciousness, the fact that I see the leaves of a tree not as black but as green, the sun as round and not square, and taste sugar as sweet and not bitter, that I determine the first and second strokes of a clock as successive and not as one beside the other nor determine the first as cause and the second as effect, and so on, all this is something which, from this standpoint falls in *me*, the subject. (6:135/489)

We see here what the "subjective standpoint" of transcendental idealism is for Hegel: the view, held by Kant and more "consequently" by others, that everything of which we are conscious is an appearance and so a content of our minds. Hegel is claiming, astonishingly, that the empty concept of the thing in itself has led to the very thing which it was supposed to avoid—the complete subjectivization of experience. What it was supposed to achieve—the possibility that the knowable contents of our minds might be correlated with entities outside the mind—now seems, with Fichte, to be the very thing it blocks.

Here, then, is the overall situation: according to the Kantian approach, experience is "subjective" in that both its form and its content fall within the subject. Attempting to provide a correlation of our experiences with entities outside the mind requires us, at a minimum, to view those entities as exhibiting abstract identity; but this is inconsistent if those entities are truly to be unknowable. If we get rid of the inconsistency by denying even abstract identity

to things in themselves, we only complete the subjectivization of experience. Kant's doctrine of the thing in itself is, to be sure, inconsistent in Hegel's view; but the inconsistency comes in an attempt to solve a deeper problem, that of how the objects we experience can be independent of us.

What if we attempt to eliminate *this* problem at its root—at the point where all determinate experience is located “within” the subject? If we deny this, then our experiences put us in direct touch with mind-independent things. In the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel seems to hold this to be the case for sense-perception: “The sentient subject is thus determined from outside, that is to say its corporeity is determined by something external. . . . The general modes of sensation are related to [*beziehen sich auf*] the physical and chemical qualities of natural objects . . . and are mediated by the various sense-organs” (*Enz.* § 401 *Zus.*). Has Hegel landed in naïve realism? Has he repudiated Kant only to return, tacitly, to Aristotle? No, because “related to” is not the same as “directly represents,” to say nothing of the Aristotelian “identical with.”<sup>16</sup> But if the concrete contents of our experience are merely “related” to outside objects, they must be, as Hegel says here, the results of our “mediating” sensory organs. And then we are back at the view that all we can know are the contents of our mind.

How does Hegel think he has escaped this? Perhaps a summary will help. The underlying issue was whether and how the specific things we experience can be contents of our mind while remaining independent of it. Kant shows that two possible solutions have failed: the complete subjectivization of experience in “dogmatic idealism” (*CPR* B, 274) and its sheer objectivization in transcendental realism (*CPR* B, 519). But Kant's own attempt to steer a middle course, in which independence is provided by something outside experience and so incapable of being intuited or known, has run into the inconsistency that if the thing in itself is to provide independence, it must be enough of a thing that it is not wholly unknowable.

Hegel's solution, the fourth, begins by recognizing that the need for abstract identity on the part of the thing in itself comes not directly from the need to provide mind independence to sensory objects but from the need to do so by invoking something wholly outside experience. If the thing in itself cannot be found within experience, in other words, it needs somehow to “ground” experience, or some of its aspects, from outside. Otherwise the thing in itself has no thinkable relation at all to what we experience, and we can just forget about it.

What if we allow the thing in itself to furnish mind independence to objects from a position *within* experience—the alternative which, back at the begin-

ning, we saw Kant rule out? Since all intuited contents are in part products of the mind's activity for Hegel as for Kant (see *Enz.* §§ 448–449), this mind independence must be furnished by something unintuitive and so unknowable. The thing in itself must, therefore, be something unknowable *within* experience. Because we actually experience it, we do not need to attribute to it the role of ground in order to think of it as there at all. What Hegel is trying to do, then, is reformulate the distinction between things as we experience them and things in themselves so that it is no longer a distinction between what can and cannot be experienced. If he can do that, he no longer needs to see the thing in itself as grounding appearances and so no longer needs to refer to what is in itself as a “thing.”

If we abstract “Ding” from “Ding-an-sich,” we get one of Hegel's standard phrases: “an sich.” The contrast we are looking for between things as we experience them and things as mind independent confronts us on almost every page of his writings—as the distinction between “for itself” (*für sich*) and “in itself” (*an sich*).

For Hegel, “all things are in the first instance *an sich*” (*Enz.* § 124 *Zus.*; see also § 140 *Zus.*). A child, in Hegel's example, is thus “in itself” the adult it will become: to know what a “child” is means to know that it is, in some respects, a vacancy which will only gain content after it has grown out of childhood (3:25/12, and more generally, 3:51–52/31–32). The Hegelian in-itself is not an indeterminable something beyond experience but an indeterminacy—a potentiality—which is found as such within experience and which goes on to determine, or actualize, itself within appearances. A “thing in itself” is thus unknowable because it is the *futural* aspect of a thing we experience. Hegel has not only empiricized the thing in itself but has done what anyone building on Kant (for whom time was the condition of all experience [*CPR* B, 50]) should do: he has temporalized it. The “in-itselfness” of a thing, the aspect of it which is independent of us, is its futural side.<sup>17</sup>

It is a commonplace that Hegel criticizes Kant's view of the thing in itself; my point here is that he does so in the spirit of Aristotle's attack on Plato's Theory of Forms (see McCumber 1993, 126). Hegel does not deny the notion of the in-itself any more than Aristotle denied the existence of Platonic forms; rather, he rejects what might be called the Kantian *chorismos*: the separation of the in-itself from experience.<sup>18</sup> To put this point somewhat differently: What we experience determinately is contents of our minds and so dependent on us; it is we who make the sensory data we experience into objects. But how those

objects are going to develop is, so to speak, up to them; it is their “in-itselfness.” When we identify something as being a child, we are saying that it will become an adult. But that development is not our doing, and we cannot know—now—what exactly is going to be the result or even that it is going to happen. All we can say, looking at a child, is that in the future something not the child—and perhaps, sadly, not an adult either—will be there.<sup>19</sup> The future as such thus has no form or shape whatever (18:501)—not even that of abstract identity. The contents of our minds are therefore capable of surprising us, and this capacity for surprise constitutes their independence from our minds.

William Bristow (2007) has put what I think is the same point from a different angle. He notes that for Hegel in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*, esoteric philosophy is “philosophy which does not yet exist as a science” (192); it is then, in my term, “philosophy in itself.” As Bristow goes on to argue, developing the system is a communal work. As such it is in principle impossible for any single philosopher—even Hegel—to know how the system is going to develop; if communal labor is necessary, then philosophy itself must await that labor before any individual can know in detail what it is. And if philosophy itself can surprise us in its development from the in-itself to the for-itself, so can anything else.

For Kant, the crucial role of the concept of the in-itself was to indicate the limits of our knowledge:

The concept of a noumenon [in the negative sense] is necessary in order not to extend sensible cognition over things in themselves, and hence in order to limit the objective validity of sensible cognition. . . . The concept of a noumenon is therefore only a *boundary concept* [*Grenzbegriff*] serving to limit the pretension of sensibility, and hence has only a negative use. (*CPR* B, 310–311)

But because noumena (in the negative sense of things in themselves) only lead, in the more consistent versions of Kantianism developed by people like Fichte, to the complete subjectivization of experience, they cannot do this job. Hegel’s rethinking of in-itselfness as an ingredient in experience enables him to do it: to show the limits of our sensory knowledge. He has done so, provided that the nature of our cognitive limits is understood differently than by Kant. Hegel is not concerned with the kind of overall limitation of cognition to sensibility that occupied Kant, for without the Kantian concept of things in themselves to circumscribe the knowable domain from outside, cognition has no limits determinable in advance. Limits which are ingredients in our experience must,

like the other ingredients in our experience, come to be known empirically. That is why an overall account of experience, even one as abstract as Kant's, is impossible for Hegel.

There is, finally, one kind of case in which the future of a thing does not serve as an empirical limitation of our knowledge of it, and that is when it has no future: when it is over and done with, dead. This is evident in the *Phenomenology's* opening section on "sense-certainty," where pointing something out—the most radical (because least linguistic) way of distinguishing components of the passing flow of experience—can only designate something that has been (3:889/63); the universal itself is born, here in the *Phenomenology*, as a succession of such has-beens. The theme that only what is dead can be known is evident in the famous discussion of the Owl of Minerva at the end of the preface to the *Philosophy of Right* (7:28/21), and it is what Hegel is getting at when he says that "a true knowledge which did not know the object as it is in itself" is absurd (5:39/46). To know an object as it is in itself is to know the entirety of its future, and that is indeed possible—but only when it has no future.<sup>20</sup>

### DOES HEGEL KNOW NOUMENA?

The situation with regard to what I call noumena, rationally ordered non-empirical entities, is more complex, and even mysterious, than that concerning the thing in itself. Indeed, that Hegel even recognizes their existence, much less claims to know them, is denied by some. Thus, Karl Ameriks (2000, 297) accuses Hegel of not noting that things in themselves have rational structure, which would reduce them to noumena in the negative sense. But while Hegel's explicit discussions of the thing in itself are restricted to the unknown X which lies behind appearances (and thus follow my usage here), the treatment of Kant in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* devotes no fewer than three pages to the way in which the noumenal realm is populated with distinct, and therefore rationally structured, ideas (20:352–354). As Hegel puts it a few pages later, "This now is the a priori side of the Kantian philosophy, the being-determined of reason, the differentiations of reason in itself. It does not get to the determination of individuality" (20:363).

Hegel is not only aware that Kant attributes rational structure to at least some noumena but (as we saw) also approves of Kant's "description" of that structure. His problem with Kant's account of reason is procedural: "[Kant's philosophy] has assumed finite cognition as the fixed and final standpoint. This

philosophy has [thus] made an end to the metaphysics of the understanding, as an objective dogmatism, but in fact has only translated it into a subjective dogmatism" (20:333). The determinations of reason are, we heard, described by Kant "empirically" rather than philosophically. They originate, in the last instance, in the categories of the understanding which, as we saw, Hegel thinks Kant derives from an uncritical acceptance of the logic of the Aristotelian syllogism. Hegel is thus not saying that the entire supersensible realm for Kant is empty; what Ameriks (2000, 298) regards as his bad argument for this, at *Enz.* § 48, is not about the contents of the noumenal realm but about the naiveté of assuming that all contradiction must be located in reason, not in reality.

But it is one thing to say that Hegel knows *about* noumena, in their contrast to things in themselves; it is another to say that he thinks he actually knows *them*. This issue is complex because knowledge of noumena was connected, for Kant, Hegel, and much of the early German nineteenth century,<sup>21</sup> with the issue of intellectual intuition. Knowledge for Kant results when categories are applied to intuitions, so in order to have knowledge of a noumenon we would have to have some sort of intuition of it.<sup>22</sup> Since noumena by definition are nonsensory, this would have to be some sort of nonsensory intuition—an "intellectual intuition":

How, if we depart from the senses, are we to make comprehensible that our categories (which would be the only remaining concepts for noumena) still signify anything at all—given that in order for them to relate to any object at all there must still be given something more than the unity of thought: viz., in addition a possible intuition to which they can be applied? (*CPR* B, 311; see also *CPR* B, 307)

A faculty of intellectual intuition would be an "intuitive understanding"<sup>23</sup> which (a) creates its own objects ("intuitions") simply by (b) thinking about them (*CPR* B, 72). Kant discusses the idea of such an understanding further in the *Critique of Judgment* (*AA*, 5:401–403) and there adds several strands to his account. Since it immediately creates its individual objects in their rational order, an intuitive understanding does not have to move from universal to particular. It (c) grasps all particulars as given in the universal immediately, and so all at once,<sup>24</sup> and achieves (d) cognition of the whole of reality as a single set of necessary (and so ordered) objects, all cognized at once—as what the *Critique of Pure Reason* calls noumena "in the *positive signification*" (*CPR* B, 307–308). (e) Because of this, says Kant, if we had intellectual intuition, "we would find no distinction between natural mechanism and the technic of nature," that

is, the mechanical processes of nature would be immediately recognized as purposive (5:404). (f) As noted by Xavier Tillette (1995, 32), the intuitive understanding can also know itself, which means that it knows at once both the object it creates and itself as creating that object, rather than knowing the object as external to it.

If we had an intuitive understanding, for Kant, a priori knowledge of nature would be possible; but we don't. Knowing all reality as a single set of necessary objects amounts to divine omniscience; and an intuitive understanding, if it exists, is God's, not ours. Kant not only denies that we possess intuitive understandings, he also denies that we can know they exist elsewhere. *Our* understandings work together with intuitions, to be sure, but they do not create those intuitions; they merely order sensory input according to the forms of space and time.

In formulating his concept of an intuitive understanding, Kant leans on a philosophical tradition going back at least to Aristotle's account of divine knowledge in *Metaphysics* 12, a tradition carried down by Augustine (*quia vides ea, sunt*).<sup>25</sup> The history of intellectual intuition also continued after Kant, as Hegel knew. For Fichte, in the second introduction to the *Science of Knowledge*, and for Schelling, in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*,<sup>26</sup> the intuitive understanding not only belongs to us but is an indispensable tool for the philosopher. In Hegel's words: "The absolute principle, the sole real ground and firm standpoint of philosophy in Fichte as well as Schelling is intellectual intuition" (2:114/173).<sup>27</sup>

For both Fichte and Schelling, intellectual intuition was not merely a capacity of ours but was absolutely necessary for the philosopher. Though the developments are exceedingly complex, the underlying argument is simple enough: basic premises cannot be established by argument; therefore we must know them by intuition. The intuition of a basic premise for thought can hardly be sensory intuition, and so it must be intellectual. The basic intuitive premise for philosophy is the *cogito* of Descartes, which in the case of Kant appears as the synthetic unity of apperception, in the case of Fichte as the ego's self-positing, and in the case of Schelling, usually, as the indifferent identity of subject and object.<sup>28</sup>

Given the importance of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling to Hegel's early texts, in which he is preoccupied with fighting free of all of them, approaches to Hegel based on those texts rightly locate one key issue concerning Hegel's reception of Kant in his divergence from Kant on the issue of intellectual intuition—in his assigning of it to us.<sup>29</sup> But "us" here is ambiguous: does he assign intellectual intuition to humans in general, or to philosophers in particular?

If intellectual intuition properly belongs to a divine mind, philosophy can only make use of it by becoming a sort of human mimicry of, or participation in, the divine creativity. In his (early) embrace of it for philosophy, Hegel (as Béatrice Longuenesse [2000, 263] puts it) abandons “the point of view of man” in favor of “the knowledge of God,” in the sense that he believes that “God’s knowledge is accessible to finite consciousness” as philosophy. Philosophy is therefore God’s knowledge as possessed by a human being; this is important because if one seeks to salvage the traditional view of Hegel as a restoration of metaphysics *without* seeing this move as the kind of tacit and global dismissal of the critical philosophy I discussed in Chapter 1—if one accepts Kant’s arguments that metaphysics is beyond the capacities of the human mind, yet wishes to allow philosophers to engage in it—then one has to say that metaphysics is the affair of a divine, or quasi-divine, component of the philosopher, of a sort of *sofia thurathen*—wisdom which, like Aristotle’s nous, “comes in through the door.”<sup>30</sup>

The view that Hegel not only adopted intellectual intuition as a human capacity but, like Schelling, made it an operative principle of his philosophy has been most extensively advocated by James Kreines (2007). Kreines’s account amounts to the most consistent and persuasive recent attempt to show that Hegel thinks we can have a priori knowledge of concrete laws of nature—that we can philosophize from a quasi-divine standpoint which permits Hegel to engage in a quasi-Schellingian form of metaphysics. I will therefore engage it in some detail.

Kreines begins by pointing out that in evaluating Hegel’s reception of Kant’s doctrine of intellectual intuition, we must distinguish what we have already seen to be two of its different strands. One is the view that the understanding creates its own objects; the other, which for Kant follows from this one, is the view that the intuitive understanding knows all those objects “by grasping reality immediately and all at once” (308). Kreines (331 n.13) argues that Hegel’s version of intellectual intuition is serial: our intuitive understanding creates its objects, but only one at a time.<sup>31</sup> I follow Kreines in this and in the view that it amounts to a decisive break, not only with Kant’s view but with that of Schelling, but not in his view that intellectual intuition gives us philosophical knowledge of mind-independent laws governing nature. Instead, I will argue that intellectual intuition is not only serialized but “linguisticized” in the later Hegel; what it knows and creates is a series of systematically defined words.



This is necessary because of certain problems with Kreines's reading, among them the following three:

1. Kreines (321) cites Hegel as saying that "in thinking about things [*Nachdenken*], we always seek what is fixed, persisting, and inwardly determined, and what governs [*regierenden*] the particular" (*Enz.* § 21 *Zus.*) If Hegel were talking about intellectual intuition, this would indicate that such intuition knows natural laws. But in § 21, Hegel is talking not about intellectual intuition but about *Nachdenken*, a broader and vaguer kind of reflection, which I will discuss in the next chapter. For the moment, *Nachdenken* includes not only scientific reflection on nature but such "spiritual" matters as moral reflection and reflection on laws in general; that is presumably why Hegel here employs the term *regierenden* rather than what he would normally use, *bestimmenden*. The statement that "nature is governed by universal laws," which Kreines also quotes (332 n.31), is not Hegel's own view but from a discussion of Anaxagoras, for whom nature is governed (*kratei*) by spirit (*nous*; 12:23<sup>32</sup>).
2. Kreines cites one of Hegel's criticisms of empiricism: that it simply accepts the immediate validity of sensory experience. Since Hegel rejects that, knowledge for him is provided by the "mediating" activity of the mind. This is true, as Hegel's discussion of reflection (*Nachdenken*), to be discussed in the next chapter, shows. But the knowledge that comes out of sensory experience via the mediating activity of the mind is, precisely as mediated, not the result of intellectual intuition; for when Hegel rejects intellectual intuition, as we will see later, it is precisely on the grounds of its *immediacy*. Nor is knowledge which comes out of experience knowledge of natural laws, which Hegel defines as two determinations taken as simple and as related in a simple way, so that they give the appearance (*Schein*) of being independent of each other (*Enz.* § 270 *Zus.*). Such laws would not be objects of knowledge for Hegel, since the independence of the two moments is a mere *Schein*, a false appearance. Ultimately, the knowledge which comes from any sort of experience is the set of universals that makes up Hegel's own system and is not knowledge of laws of any kind.

This all accords with the fact that natural laws are not paramount for Hegel; he never gives a serious account of them, and the offhand remarks I have cited from § 270 are from a *Zusatz*, or supplement, that is, from remarks he made

in the classroom or elsewhere. Nature for Hegel is philosophically, and so ultimately, not a law-governed domain but a “system of stages” (*Stufen*; § 249) in which the *Schein* of mutual independence, and so the laws themselves which depend on that *Schein*, has been overcome so that each stage is the “proximate truth” of the previous one.

3. As Kreines notes (322), Hegel talks of the empirical realm<sup>33</sup> as a realm of accidents, a mere “arrangement of disconnected things,” which means that for Hegel “empirical observation . . . does not provide any necessary connection.” Kreines concludes that on this basis, it would be those contingent arrangements which determine what the laws of nature are, so that the laws could not “govern or determine” natural events but only describe or summarize them. Kreines then points out that this view rests upon a metaphysics which empiricism cannot defend and which Hegel rejects: a metaphysics which holds that there are no necessary connections in nature.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the necessary connections in nature—the contents of natural laws—must be known by a non-empirical, that is, intellectual, intuition.

That empiricism cannot defend this highly non-empirical view is clear; that Hegel rejects it, less so. We have already seen that the view that natural laws “govern” natural events is that of Anaxagoras, not Hegel. Indeed, Hegel’s view of natural law as *Schein* suggests that laws of nature for him are merely contingent regularities, sequences of events that are repeated often but not always (as skin usually gets hardened by repeated exposure to cold but not in a rigorously quantifiable way). True, there are necessary connections for Hegel which, if they do not “govern” nature, at least have to do with it. But these are not necessarily natural laws; they can be the determinations of Hegel’s own system, formulated as “stages” of the systematic development of nature. When Hegel gives the “more robust philosophical defense of the reality and knowability of universal determinations” that Kreines calls for (328), it is not in the context of laws of nature but of his own systematic “deduction” of such determinations, which are what reflection ultimately leads to.

Thus, Hegel’s original quotes about the empiricists stand unrefuted, at least by him, and the view Kreines thinks Hegel attacks is in fact his actual view: that phenomena of nature do not exhibit necessary connections. As much is suggested in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where Hegel talks of the labor of world history in general, including that of the sciences: “The content is already the actuality reduced to a possibility, its immediacy overcome, and

the embodied shape reduced to abbreviated, simple determinations of thought” (3:34/17; on “abbreviation,” or summary, as the relation of universal to particulars, see also 5:24, 29). “X abbreviates y” is not a necessary relation. When Hegel asserts that laws of nature have “objective value and existence” (Kreines 2007, 323), it is in a hypothetical discussion (“inasmuch as it is said”).

Thoughts, for Hegel as for Kant, do not gain “objectivity” only by conforming to the nature of what is outside us; a thought is also “objective” if it is produced in a necessary way and so holds for everybody. Such thoughts, for Hegel, are “at the same time the in-itself of things and of the objective [*Gegenständlichen*] itself” (*Enz.* § 41 *Zus.* 2). This does not mean that thoughts which are objective in this sense explain, or that their determinations govern, the appearances from which they are derived, for then they would not capture the unknowable “in-itselfness” of those things—their futurity. Kreines is thus right when he says that for Hegel there is no sharp distinction between phenomena and laws of nature (322); but the result of this is that laws of nature, like the empirical phenomena from which they are derived, are confused and contingent.

One important lesson of Kreines’s work comes from the fact that scholarly literature on Hegel’s reception of intellectual intuition tends to see him as either accepting it in toto (as Longuenesse does) or as rejecting it in toto (as Kenneth Westphal [2000] does).<sup>35</sup> As Kreines shows, this does not exhaust the alternatives. There are different strands within the Kantian doctrine of intellectual intuition, and Hegel may have accepted some but not others. In the later writings, his criticisms of intellectual intuition are severe but not total.

Thus, in the “With What Must Science Begin” section of the *Science of Logic*, they are directed against the “all at once” strand of Kantian intellectual intuition, which Hegel sees as a rejection of mediation:

Intellectual intuition is the forcible rejection of mediation and of deductive [*beweisend*] external reflection. What it *enunciates*, over and above simple immediacy, is something concrete, something which contains in itself diverse determinations. However, as we have remarked the *enunciation* and exposition of such a thing is a process of mediation. (5:78/77, emphasis added; see also 5:76/76)

This criticism of intellectual intuition’s all-at-once character is specifically directed not against Kant but against Schelling. In the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel had already rejected Schelling’s view as leading to a philosophical “night in which all cows are black” (3:22/9), and he expands on

the reasons for his rejection in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* with similar sarcasm:

[Intellectual intuition] is the most comfortable manner of basing knowledge on whatever occurs to one. . . . When the presupposition of philosophy is that individuals have the immediate intuition of this identity of subject and object, philosophy appears in those individuals as an artistic talent—genius—as if only Sunday’s children had them. Philosophy, however, is by its nature capable of being universal; for its territory is thinking, and it is precisely through thinking that man is man. So the principle is a completely universal one; when a determinate intuition, consciousness, and so forth is demanded [in philosophy], this is thus the demand for a determinate particular thinking. (20:428)

The “immediacy” of intellectual intuition is thus what makes it available as an excuse for saying whatever you want and calling it philosophy. But to say that something cannot serve as the basis for philosophical thought is hardly to reject it altogether; and Hegel also approved of, or was at least beguiled by, intellectual intuition. In that same volume, he writes that Kant’s schematism, which was intended to unite the pure categories with pure intuition and thereby build a transition from the understanding to experience itself, was really (i.e., unbeknownst to Kant) nothing other than intellectual intuition:

This connection [of the categories and experience] is again one of the finest [*schönsten*] sides of the Kantian philosophy, through which pure sensibility and the pure understanding, which have previously been articulated as absolutely opposed different things, become unified. It is an intuitive understanding, or an understanding intuition; but Kant does not take it thus and comprehend it. (20:347–348)

Somewhat later, concerning Kant’s treatment of the same issue, he writes:

[Here] Kant comes closer to the explicit representation of an *intuitive understanding*. . . . But he does not arrive at the view that this “intellectus archetypus” is the true idea of the understanding.” (20:379–380)

We certainly, for both Kant and Hegel, have understandings. Kant’s reason for denying us intellectual intuition lies in our sensibility, because it operates piecemeal and so contingently. That we can think something with the understanding, for example, shows that it is possible; but it is not until we experience it with our senses that we know that it is actual (AA, 5:402). Since Hegel rejects

the all-at-once character of intellectual intuition, he is able to say that it is, like the Kantian understanding, at work even in our sensory experiences. Its operation is evident, for example, in the way we experience natural organisms:

We regard [a living thing] as if there dwelt in the sensible a concept, which posits itself in accordance with the particular; *we regard it in the manner of an intuitive understanding*. That is great, that is the idea, the truly concrete, reality determined through the indwelling concept. . . . In the organic products of nature we have the intuition of the immediate unity of concept and reality. (20:381; my emphasis)

Intellectual intuition, with its simultaneous perception of individual and particular, is what enables us to perceive an individual living thing as a member of its species. Hegel explains further:

In regarding something living, we do not remain with the idea that we have something sensible in front of us, which in one aspect is regarded in accordance with the categories of the understanding; rather we regard it as the cause of itself, as self-producing. This is the self-preservation of the living thing, as an individual it is mortal; but in that it lives, it produces itself, though it has conditions which are necessary for that. Further, the natural purpose [*Naturzweck*] is matter insofar as this is organized, an internally organized product of nature, in which everything is end and reciprocally means. All of its members are at once means and end; it is in itself simultaneously end and means, an end in itself [*Selbstzweck*]. It is the Aristotelian concept: an infinite which returns into itself, the idea. (20:378–379)

As Klaus Düsing (1986, 105) has explained, a concept (or object) of the intellectual intuition does not rest on a synthesis of disparate givens but rather signifies the original unity of the intuited whole, from which the parts, the manifold determinate and individual, then arise. Hegel later qualifies this as universality concrete in itself.

Intellectual intuition for Hegel is thus, like sensory intuition, piecemeal. It is therefore not a matter of the primordial givenness of the ego, as for Fichte and Schelling; nor does it inhere exclusively in a possible divine intellect, as for Kant. Its real “principle” in fact lies not in being independent of the senses but in conveying a unity of the sensible and the intellectual, of the individual and the universal.

Düsing also claims that Hegel’s later appropriation of intellectual intuition is no longer in the context of a substance metaphysics, à la Schelling, but in that of

a theory of the subject (1986, 119). Hegel's rejection of the metaphysical account of intellectual intuition is in Düsing's view incomplete, however; the substance metaphysics still lies at the ground of Hegel's later discussion (126). Düsing's point that the philosophical context of Hegel's later appropriation of intellectual intuition differs from the earlier one is correct; but on the definitional reading, that later context is a philosophy of language rather than a theory of the subject.<sup>36</sup> We can support this by turning to Hegel's account, in the *Encyclopedia*, of what we saw him say should replace the philosophical use, or misuse, of intellectual intuition: thinking.

Philosophy's "territory," Hegel said (five quotes ago, i.e., at 20:428), is thinking; and thought for Hegel (as for Aristotle) is not without intuition. This is because "we think in names" (*Enz.* § 462 *Anm.*). A name for Hegel is, quite traditionally, a complex of sound and meaning, and the sound is an intuition—one which is produced at will whenever we utter something, to ourselves or to others (*Enz.* § 460; see McCumber 2006). To see Hegel's linguistic version of intellectual intuition, we must turn to where he discusses linguistic sounds whose meaning has been suppressed: his treatment of "mechanical memory" in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (*Enz.* §§ 463–464; see McCumber 1990 for an overall account).

In running through a text previously memorized, mechanical memory produces "by heart," and so immediately, various words from a given language (such as German), without attaching meanings to them. It thus deals only with intuitions—the sounds, which may or may not be actually uttered, of the words it produces. The "objects" of this activity are the only objects around: the names which it immediately produces. When mechanical memory becomes thought, as Hegel puts it in his *Encyclopedia* treatment of thinking, "the intelligence is *re-cognitive* [*wiedererkennend*]; it *cognizes* [*erkennt*] an intuition, insofar as this is already its own" (§ 454); "further, it cognizes, in the name, the thing" (§ 462). "Its product, the *thought*, is the thing: simple identity of the objective and the subjective. It knows that what is *thought*, *is*; and that what *is* only *is* insofar as it is a thought" (§ 465; see also §§ 5, 21).

Since philosophy, as we have just seen, is an affair of thinking, philosophy too makes use of intuitions:

This science is the unity of art and religion in that it takes the formally external manner of intuition of the former, its subjective producing and splitting up of the substantial content into many independent shapes, into the totality of the latter—into its self-unfolding movement out of one another and its mediation

of what is thus unfolded, and not only brings them into a whole but unites them into the simple *spiritual intuition* [*geistige Anschauung*] and with that raises them to self-conscious thinking. (§572; emphasis added)

Even more than others, this passage defies translation; but the train of thought is clear. The “subjective splitting up and producing” to which Hegel refers here is the utterance of thought in verbal intuitions. On its “artistic” side, philosophy takes those verbal intuitions—what § 573 will call their “poesy”—and mediates the fragmentary and occasional status those words have in ordinary language by giving to them a defined place in the “self-unfolding movement” which, as a totality, is philosophy’s religious side. A name’s position within that totality is given by the set of other names out of which it is produced, so they constitute its systematically developed philosophical meaning. The intuited “shapes” are thus rendered “spiritual” (or linguistic) and united with philosophical thought itself. We thus return to the “definitionalist” view that Hegel’s philosophy presents a reflective bestowal of meanings on sounds, the institution of a philosophical language, resulting in what he calls, in the *Encyclopedia*, “confirmed (*bewährte*) definitions, that is, definitions whose content is not accepted merely as something that we come across, but is recognized as grounded in free thinking, and so as grounded in itself” (*Enz.* § 99).

Such a philosophical definition, we now see, is like a living thing. Its material body is an intuition—an internalized or uttered sound. Its universal yet immanent form—what Aristotle would call its “soul”—is the meaning given it by the system. It is this meaning which governs its systematic relations with other words, because the meaning of a philosophical term is a set of other philosophical terms. Philosophy thus grows somewhat the way an oak tree grows for Aristotle: as the oak takes nutrients dispersed in the soil and unifies them with its form so that they become parts of the whole, so a sound gets taken up from ordinary language and unified with its philosophical meaning and thereby with the rest of the system.

The distinction between intellectual and sensible intuition is not as sharp as many have taken it to be, for in Hegel’s view they can have the same kind of objects; we have already seen that not only noumena but *Naturzwecke*, organic wholes, are cognized as such by Hegel’s version of intellectual intuition. Nor would such a version of intellectual intuition be entirely un-Kantian. Tillette (1995, 24–25) has argued, following Giuseppe Gianetto (1990, 144–153), that a binary opposition between intellectual and sensible intuition does not apply

to Kant, because for him there can be forms of intuition which we do not have and which God does not have either—even though Kant does not devote much time or discussion to this possibility. One such would be an intuition that is in time but not in space, which would fit Hegel's account of the interior monologue of mechanical memory rather well.<sup>37</sup>

As I argued in Chapter 1, philosophical thought—in the form of Hegel's system—takes word sounds over from mechanical memory and invests them with new meanings, which it constructs out of meanings it has previously formulated in the same way. Viewing this as a linguisticized intellectual intuition yields what Hegel had, implicitly at least, promised in his criticism of Schelling's "immediacy": intellectual intuition has been replaced, as the organon of philosophy, by thought itself. Thought can only function as the replacement, however, because it has carried over the traits of intellectual intuition which I earlier identified from the *Critique of Judgment*:

- a and b. To paraphrase Kant on the intuitive understanding, all the objects that philosophical thought thinks—that is, all the definitions it produces—exist ipso facto (AA, 5:403): the verbal intuitions in which philosophical thought finds expression are given existence entirely by philosophical thought itself, when it utters them; and since we think in names, we cannot not do so. When philosophical thought "externalizes" itself into names,<sup>38</sup> it ipso facto creates its own objects, which like the sounds of words are intuitive in nature. As *Enz.* § 465 has it, "its product, the *thought*, is the thing."
- c. In intellectual intuition there is no need to "proceed" from the universal to the individual (see 5:406). Similarly, when Hegel combines terms already defined to produce a new meaning, the combination is not complete until a single sound has been assigned to it. Neither the sound of the word nor its unified meaning can exist without the other; universal and individual come into existence together, and there is no need (or possibility) to proceed from one to the other.
- d. Intellectual intuition for Kant exhibits no contingency in "the agreement of nature in its products with particular laws of the understanding" (AA, 5:406). Similarly, the sound of a German word, once it has been stripped of its meaning by mechanical memory and invested with new meaning by philosophical thought, has no function except to express that new meaning, which as a meaning is conceptual and so is a general or universal rule for speech. Since there is nothing in the sound



which could hamper the expression, the agreement of the two—once both are present—is necessary.

- e. Intellectual intuition provides no basis for distinguishing between natural mechanism and the “technic of nature”; if we had intellectual intuition, the mechanical movements of nature would be immediately recognized as purposive (AA, 5:404). Because the “objects” produced by philosophical thought are in the first instance sounds without meanings, Hegel says they relate to one another “mechanically,” hence the name “mechanical memory.” But because they exist only as invested with meanings, they are used purposively, to express thoughts. Their purposiveness is thus fully unified with (though not, *pace* Kant, indistinguishable from) their mechanism.
- f. Because thought is nothing over and above its activity of thinking, that is, of uttering itself in names, in knowing those names thought straightaway knows itself. Its knowledge is thus what Hegel (again at *Enz.* § 465, quoted above) calls the “simple identity of the subjective and objective.”

Schelling’s version of intellectual intuition, as I noted above, was also a simple identity of subject and object. There is, however, a difference. Notably missing from Hegel’s linguistic version of intellectual intuition is its immediacy. For Kant, intuitive understanding was, though counterfactual, necessary in order for us to conceive of the accord between concepts and natural givens as necessary rather than merely contingent. The conception of that kind of necessity is necessary for us to “form the conception of nature as an organic whole” and thus for us to justify the project of systematizing our experience.<sup>39</sup> “It is this contingency that makes it so difficult for our understanding to unify the manifold in nature so as to give rise to cognition. This task, which an intuitive understanding does not need to perform, can be accomplished only through a harmony between natural characteristics and our power of concepts; and this harmony is very contingent” (AA, 5:406).

Hegel’s main difference with Kant is that for him this systematization of experience comes not all at once but step by step; it is not a comfortable way of saying whatever occurs to you but, as part of the “self-unfolding” of the system, is, as we saw, “verified” or rationally mediated. Hegel has thus, I take it, made intellectual intuition at least relatively plausible, given that the objects it creates are not nature in its entirety, viewed all at once as necessary, but merely a sequence of defined words. But does Hegel, then, use it to know noumena?

A noumenon, for Kant, was a concept of the mind conceived without reference to sensible intuition (*CPR* B, 300–308), and whether this applies to Hegel depends on what we mean by “reference.” In the usual philosophical sense of the term, the use of a sign to designate a thing, Hegel’s system does not “refer” at all; it is a sequence of definitions first formed without regard to whether and how far they capture anything external to the sequence itself, and its relation to the world outside comes subsequently, from the way the systematic definitions it formulates capture the meanings of German words. In this sense the system itself, with its various moments in rational order, would be “noumenal.”

In the wider, psychological sense of “refer,” according to which it means to reference or take into account (“her testimony referred to prevailing social conditions”), Hegel certainly has taken external realities into account when—at each stage of the system—he has to decide what German word sound he is going to give to the new moment. In this second sense of “refer,” there are clearly no noumena for Hegel, for all kinds of nonsensible things are taken into account by the system in that names for them are defined. The same holds for Kant, who freely gave names to the various noumena he discussed—“God,” “soul,” and “freedom,” to mention a few.

This shows another striking parallel with Kant. For Kant, no noumenal idea of reason can be given a sensible presentation: the soul, God, and freedom, for example, can never be encountered in intuition. The regulative use of such ideas, however, gives them a normative priority over phenomena:

Reason never relates [*bezieht sich*] directly [*geradezu*] to an object, but solely to the understanding. . . . Hence reason does not *create* any concepts (of objects) but only *orders* them and gives to them that unity which they can have in their greatest possible extension [*Ausbreitung*]. . . . The transcendental ideas have an excellent and indispensably necessary regulative use, viz., to direct the understanding to a certain goal by reference to which the directional lines of the understanding’s concepts converge in one point. (*CPR* B, 671–672)

If we substitute “verified definitions” for “transcendental ideas” and “historical language” for “the understanding” here, we have a close paraphrase of how Hegel’s system, on the definitional reading, can be said to relate to natural and cultural reality.<sup>40</sup>

To be sure, for Hegel system and reality, unlike Kant’s transcendental ideas and understanding, can coincide: when the definition of a German word comes to contain the same terms as does the systematic definition of the systematic

term homonymous with it, we can say that Hegel has provided a systematic definition which “comprehends” the way the term is actually used in the German of his time. He has then achieved the goals we saw him avow in the preface to the second edition of the *Science of Logic*—those of “purifying” and “raising to freedom and truth” the forms of thought found in historical language (5:27; see also 19, 30/37, 31, 39). Philosophy has then given that term a “confirmed definition,” one whose content “is not simply taken up as we merely find it in front of us, but is cognized as grounded in free thought, and that means in itself” (*Enz.* § 99 *Zus.*).

As I argued in *The Company of Words* (320–325), such coincidence between “noumenal” system and “phenomenal” language does come about for Hegel—sometimes. In the case of the Christian religion, for example, he argues repeatedly that the content is already there and needs only a change in form to be brought into the system (3:556–557/463, 580–581/484; *Enz.* § 573). But there are times when a given word simply cannot, as it stands or with modifications that would remain at all true to the way the word is actually used, be brought to full identity with its systematic analogue. In such cases, writes Hegel:

Philosophy has the right to choose from the language of common life, a language made for the world of representations, such expressions as *seem to come close* to the determinations of the concept. There cannot here be a question of showing, for a word from the language of common life, that in such life we connect it to the same concept for which philosophy uses it; for common life has representations, not concepts, and philosophy itself is just the grasping of the Concept of what is otherwise mere representation. (6:406/708)

In such cases, the system thus assumes a normative priority over representational language.

Does Hegel, then, know noumena? Of course. The system itself, like Kant’s system of ideas of reason, is a rationally ordered set of terms formulated without regard to whether they capture sensible externalities. It is thus “noumenal” for Hegel, and he knows it because he has produced it by means of his own linguisticized version of intellectual intuition. But, like the in-itself, the noumenal is not for Hegel a separate domain, as it was for Kant. The noumena derived in Hegel’s system can achieve phenomenal presentation when a word from German actually matches the definition given its homonym within the system. In Houlgate’s (2006, 131) words, Hegel “rejects the idea that what a thing—or being—is ‘in itself’ transcends our experience and instead conceives of

being 'in itself' as the intelligible ontological structure of the very things we experience."

Said structure, I have argued, is not in fact intelligible, because it is futural. Just as a possible future can become the actual present and the in-itself can become for itself, so noumena can for Hegel become phenomenal. In the words of the Medieval Irish monk who wrote "Pangur Ban":

I get wisdom day and night,  
Turning darkness into light.



## CHAPTER 3

# TRANSCENDENTAL VERSUS

# LINGUISTIC IDEALISM

KARL AMERIKS (1991, 397) has influentially put the main problem regarding Hegel's idealism as one of whether "an interesting form of Hegelian idealism can be found that is true to [Hegel's] text, that is not clearly extravagant, and that is not subject to the charge of triviality." Ameriks's own answer is no. Robert Stern's (2008, 173), by contrast, is yes: "We have arguably reached an account of Hegel's idealism that meets Ameriks' original desiderata."

Talk of "reaching" and "finding" Hegel's account of idealism is a reminder that in the view of both Ameriks and Stern, Hegel does not plainly discuss his own view of idealism in his writings—why else reach and search? In fact, as we will see, Hegel does present his version of idealism; it is just that his discussions are dismissed. Thus, Robert Pippin (1989, 6) begins his account of Hegel's idealism, which is the starting point for both Ameriks and Stern, by dismissing Hegel's own use of the term as "loose." Ameriks (1991, 397) exceeds him, calling it "trivial," and Stern (2008) does not mention it at all.

Why would a voluminous literature seeking to deal with Hegel's views on idealism dismiss what he actually says about it? We find a clue when Ameriks (1991, 395) points out that for Hegel idealism does not contrast with realism. This, obviously, renders Hegel's conception of it unable to take sides in the realism/idealism debate; and it is that debate which is of interest to contemporary writers. But this does not mean that getting clear on Hegel's concept of idealism is useless altogether. What may be useless, indeed misleading, is Hegel's own decision to call what he is talking about "idealism."

This will take some showing, not (I will argue) because we must dismiss what Hegel actually says about idealism in favor of the accounts of it that we can search out or reach in his writings, but because idealism as Hegel approaches it is a complex matter, with a long history and many subtypes. Much of Hegel's concern, in fact, is to contextualize the different forms of idealism to be found in the history of philosophy and to keep them straight; and seeing how he performs that task will be relatively easy. When it comes to the idealism of Hegel's own time, however, Hegel's concern is the opposite: he tries to run together, for reasons that he thinks are not only good but urgent, approaches which are, even on the surface, not only different but opposed to one another. At that point things become very slippery, and we should not be surprised that Kenneth Westphal's (1993) defense of Hegel's idealism concedes that his use of the term "idealism" is "broad and unusual" (269–270).

It is best to start, once again, with some basic Kant.

### KANT AND "IDEALISM"

Kant defines "idealism" in general as the view that the existence of objects outside our minds is either doubtful (the "problematic idealism" of Descartes) or impossible (the "dogmatic idealism" of Berkeley; *CPR* B, 274). Kant's "transcendental idealism" breaks with both, and the first step in formulating it (since it is transcendental) is to look away from objects to the mind's activity in constituting them.<sup>1</sup> Our faculty of intuition, we find, presents certain appearances as external to us and to each other. Hence, representations, or intuitions, "are called external, not as if they referred to objects that would be external in themselves (*an sich*), but because they relate perceptions to space, in which everything is external to everything—but space itself is in us" (*CPR* A, 370).

Thus, transcendental idealism "allows that the objects of outer intuition, just as they are intuited in space, are also actual" (*CPR* B, 520). External objects are not illusions, as Descartes feared and Berkeley held, but, in Kant's celebrated formula, at once "empirically real and transcendently ideal." Illusions, to be sure, are possible: we see raindrops, when the sun is right, as a rainbow. The drops, but not the rainbow, are empirically real. But transcendently, "not only are these drops mere appearances; rather, even their round shape, indeed even the space in which they fall, are nothing in themselves. They are, rather, mere modifications or basic states [*Grundlagen*] of our sensible intuition" (*CPR* B, 63). The very space in which external objects are ordered is itself a product

of intuition. To be an appearance is then to be a modification or state of that faculty; the “modifications” which come and go constitute the matter of our sensations, while the abiding *Grundlagen* constitute its form (see *CPR* B, 34). This changing matter of sensation, while it is “in” us, is not at our discretion. Rather, it is given *to us* in sensibility (*CPR* B, 33–34). The overall picture, then, is that given material is ordered in space and time by the faculty of intuition; only then can it become an appearance and, as such, an object of awareness (*CPR* B, 34). It is the form of appearances, not their matter, which is due to us; what we contribute is the principled operation of the faculty of intuition, and so the reality of its deliverances cannot be doubted.

One aspect of this which will be important for Hegel is that it does not deny “being” to appearances. In his discussion of the nature of being, or existence, in the context of the ontological proof, Kant says:

Through the concept [of a sensible thing] the object is thought as in accordance only with the universal conditions of a possible empirical cognition as such, but through [thinking its] existence it is thought as contained in the context of the totality of experience. (*CPR* B, 628–629)

In the case of a sensible thing, to “exist” means to be contained within possible experience—which is for Kant limited to appearances (see *CPR* B, 239–240, 303). Though the “existence” of noumena is always a problem, Kant has basically redefined being in terms of appearances, so as to free it from any presupposition that to exist implies having some sort of mind-independent reality.

All appearances, and all sensible beings as well, then, are “subjective” in the sense that they are in us. This, indeed, is the main point of the “Transcendental Aesthetic,” as Kant brings out strongly in his “General Comments”:

All our intuition is nothing but the presentation of appearances. The things that we intuit are not in themselves what we intuit them as being. Nor are their relations constituted in themselves as they appear to us. And if we annul ourselves as subject . . . then this entire constitution of objects and all their relations in space and time—indeed, even space and time themselves—would vanish; being appearances, they cannot exist in themselves, but can exist only in us. (*CPR* B, 59–60)

We can sum up Kant’s transcendental idealism, for present purposes, as the view that both the changing and unchanging features of sensory objects, including all the relations in which they stand to each other, are mind dependent, though their “matter” is given to us and is not at our discretion. As



a result of this ordering, some objects are ordered in space and so count as empirically external to us.

### NATURAL IDEALISM IN HEGEL

This, to be sure, does not sound much like what Hegel calls “idealism.” Let us start from nature, where things are a bit simpler but no less slippery. We begin with one of Hegel’s most famous, and oddest, passages:

Even the animals are not shut out of this wisdom, but, on the contrary, show themselves to be most profoundly initiated into it; for they do not just stand idly in front of sensuous things as if these possessed intrinsic being but, despairing of their reality, and completely assured of their nothingness, they fall to without ceremony and eat them up. (3:91/65)

In spite of its flowery references to the Eleusinian mysteries, this passage (later reprised at *Enz.* § 246 *Zus.*) is in part, as Pippin (2008, 142) calls it, a “kind of joke.” But, as Pippin recognizes, it is at bottom quite serious. For Pippin, the serious claim behind Hegel’s joking words is that our undeniable dependence on nature counts ethically only when we have reason to decide that it counts. But the passage’s first lesson is simpler. It is that Hegel genuinely believes that animals are idealists. In the *Lectures on Aesthetics* he makes it clear, even emphatic, that not all idealism belongs to the human realm. There is also an “idealism” of living things, or what I will call “natural idealism”: “This is the idealism of life. For philosophy is not at all the only example of idealism; nature, as life, already in fact does what idealistic philosophy brings to completion in its own spiritual field [*tut als Leben faktisch dasselbe*]” (13:163/120).

As Hegel puts it in the *Philosophy of Nature*, “absolute idealism” (as he calls it there and, we will see, elsewhere) is the *fortdauernde Tun des Lebens*, the ongoing activity of life itself. The self-maintenance and activity of the living thing are “idealistic” because they exhibit nothing less than the overall dynamic of sublation (*Aufhebung*) itself, for in remaining the same through its many changes, the living thing “becomes an other, which however is always sublated” (*Enz.* § 337 *Zus.*).

In animal life, which is its highest natural form, this idealism is expressed in three ways. Morphologically, the parts of an animal are not like those of an artifact or a nonliving system like the solar system, for they cannot exist separately from the whole and their entire existence is consumed by their role in that whole. In this, “the real, the positive, is continually posited negatively and as an

ideal, while this ideality is precisely the maintenance of the real differences and the element in which they are sustained" (13:164/121; see also *Enz.* § 350 *Zus.*).

"Ideality" (*Idealität*) is not the same as idealism. For Kant, in Rudolf Eisler's (1994, 256) gloss, ideality is "dependence on the lawfulness of cognizing consciousness"; it is what we attribute to things insofar as we understand them as products of our mind. Since Hegel views nature itself as idealistic, he cannot make the distinction in this way, for nature does not make attributions. For him, ideality is the dependence of a part of an animal body on the unifying activity which keeps that body alive. The dependence goes the other way as well: no living thing can sustain the loss of all its parts. "Idealism" is thus not a conceptual framework which is attributed to the living thing but simply the dynamic interdependence of its whole and its parts. To be "ideal" is therefore to be a concrete whole whose parts are *aufgehoben* within, or "moments" of, it: "on the one hand, the ideal [*Ideelle*<sup>2</sup>] is concrete, veritable being, and on the other hand the moments of this concrete being are no less ideal—are sublated in it; but in fact what is, is only the one concrete whole from which the moments are inseparable" (5:172/155). In the living animal body, this active unifying feature is its "soul" (13:164/121–122), in the Aristotelian sense of the principle of its growth and self-maintenance. Hegel has thus given to natural idealism, and so to the philosophical idealism which is "factically identical" with it, a broadly Aristotelian, rather than a Kantian, meaning. Idealism is not primarily a philosophical doctrine, or even a family of them, but an activity: the activity of the soul in a living thing.

The parts of an animal and their respective dispositions can also be generated in sequence, in which case we have the second manifestation of animal idealism: self-motion. For Hegel (again following Aristotle, at *Physics* 8.7), this means primarily motion in space or locomotion (13:165–166/122–123). Such motion includes motions internal to the animal body which sustain it, such as the circulation of its various fluids. It also, and more importantly, includes the movements of an animal's vocal apparatus and the resonances these set up in other bodily parts: the "free sounding of the animal voice" (13:166/123). In these activities, we again see "ideality," in the form of a variety of parts moving in harmony to create a single note.

Finally, in contrast to movements and bodily parts, what gets unified in this way may not initially belong to the animal at all. The most drastic (*durchgreifendsten*) example of animal idealism is what Hegel jokes about in the *Phenomenology*: the animal's consumption of beings external to it—the things it eats.

In this, the animal posits external, individual objects *as* food—and proceeds to idealize them, or make them moments of its own being.

Natural idealism is thus the activity by which distinct parts of, or even objects external to, a living thing are reduced to their contribution to that living thing—to that larger and more “concrete” whole:

Animal subjectivity is, however, this: to maintain itself in its corporeality and in being affected by an external world and to remain with itself as a universal. The life of the animal is thus, as this highest point of nature, the absolute idealism of having the determination of its corporeality in it, at the same time, in a completely fluid way. (*Enz.* § 350 *Zus.*)

The participation in this activity of both the parts and their unity is their “ideality.” As Houlgate (2006, 428) puts it, in being idealized “things are transformed from being fundamentally separate objects to being moments of a process.”

Just why all this should be called “idealism” in other than a Pickwickian sense is still unclear, but we have some promising hints. First, idealism—indeed, “absolute idealism”—is to be found in the animal kingdom. This means, second, that idealism is not for Hegel most basically a philosophical doctrine. It is a *Tun*, something done—an activity. Third, “idealism” of this natural sort is not basically different from philosophical idealism (problematic, dogmatic, transcendental, etc.); rather, it is *faktisch dasselbe*, “in fact the same.” Fourth and most important, although natural idealistic activity can include what Hegel calls “positing,” this does not mean that it creates or generates what it posits; animals relate idealistically to the food they devour, but they do not generate it.<sup>3</sup> Nor does the naturally cognizing, that is to say, sensing (*empfindend*) soul create, or even modify, its sensory content. As with Kant, it *finds* it:

As sentient [*empfindend*] the soul is dealing with an immediate, merely given determination, which it has not itself produced but which it only finds to hand given internally or externally and therefore not dependent on [the soul]. (*Enz.* § 399 *Zus.*)<sup>4</sup>

What Hegel is doing here is defining what it means to be a sensory content; and what it means is to be given to, and so independent of, the soul. This applies across the board. Not only the changing contents of sense, or what Kant called its “material,” but even the basic principles by which those contents are ordered in time and space belong to the objects—not to the mind:

[We do not say that] space and time are only subjective forms. That is what Kant wanted to make space and time. In truth, however, things themselves are

spatial and temporal; that double form of externality is not applied to them one-sidedly by our intuition, but is originally imparted to them by intrinsically infinite mind, the creative eternal Idea. (*Enz.* § 488 *Zus.*)

Philosophical idealism, since it is “factually the same” as natural idealism, will also not deny the existence of mind-independent beings. It will not doubt them, as Descartes did; or deny them, as Berkeley did; or accept them as outcomes of the mind’s ordering activity, as Kant did. As Robert Brandom (2002, 198) puts it:

The claim is not that if there were no cognitive activity—no resolving of incompatible commitments, no use of singular terms, no asserting, no counterfactual reasoning—there would be no determinate way the world is. There is not the slightest reason to believe that Hegel thought any such thing.

Rather, for Hegel, philosophical idealism will accept sensory beings *as they are given*—and then reduce them to components of something else. Thus, when Hegel identifies philosophical idealism as the view that “the truth of things is that as such immediately individual things—that is, sensible things—they are merely illusory play [*Schein*], appearance [*Erscheinung*]” (*Enz.* § 246 *Zus.*), he is not denying them reality or saying that they are, as sensible, mind dependent. A crime, in the *Philosophy of Right*, is a *Schein*, but it is quite real and must be punished (*PhR* §§ 94–96). And as appearances, Hegel tells us, *Erscheinungen* need not be appearances for us; for things to be appearances is, ultimately, for them to have “the ground of their being not in themselves, but in the universal divine Idea” (*Enz.* § 45 *Zus.*).

A first stab at Hegel’s position would therefore assimilate it to Philippus Pistorius’s (1952, 1) account of Plotinus: that things of the sensory world have a real but merely a “second rate” existence. But is Hegel ontologically Neoplatonist? His references to the “eternal,” “creative,” “universal,” and “divine” Idea suggest so, and will remain mysterious until the very end of this chapter.

## HUMAN IDEALISM I: PRACTICAL IDEALISM

A full account of what Hegel understands by “idealism” is still a long way off. Humans, to say nothing of philosophers, are not “idealistic” simply in that they move around and eat. Hegel has given us, to be sure, the simplest, and so most basic, form of idealism. To show how idealism operates in the human realm, and in particular in philosophy, we will have to look at its different types and, eventually, at its history.

Idealism on the human level is, like animal idealism, not a doctrine or theory. Nor is it, however, merely a natural activity. It is, instead, a more or less conscious version of what Arthur Fine (1986, 95) calls a program: a practice which leads to theories. The idealistic program, we may say, is that of denying true reality to objects of sense. It takes many forms, depending mainly on what is meant by “deny” and “true reality.”

One mode of such denial is implicit in all human behavior; for when I set out to do anything at all, I act on the presupposition that the things of the world are of no significance as they stand but need to be changed into what I want them to be. So understood, idealism for Hegel is a component of freedom of the will:

The free will is therefore that idealism which does not consider things as they are to be in and for themselves, whereas realism declares them to be absolute, even if they are found in the form of finitude. (*PhR* § 44 *Zus.*)

This passage is taken from Hegel’s discussion of the institution of property; merely taking possession of something is a case of what I am calling practical idealism. Since, as we will see, taking possession of one’s own body is a prerequisite for all action as such,<sup>5</sup> all human actions are idealistic in nature. In its earlier and more basic forms, practical idealism proceeds without concepts and hence has no specific results. It is merely the general activity of negating what is given (*Enz.* § 246 *Zus.*).

Idealism as Hegel views it therefore cannot be classed strictly under the heading of “theoretical philosophy”; his thought, in fact, does not in general rest easily with Kant’s distinction between theoretical and practical mind, for as we will see it views theory itself as a kind of practice. This is evident from Hegel’s discussion of the idealism implicit in human cognition.

## HUMAN IDEALISM II: COGNITIVE IDEALISM AND INWARDIZATION

One way in which we behave idealistically for Hegel is in seeking to know nature. When I “do science”—observe nature or conduct an experiment—there is no room to doubt that the sensible things which I see or manipulate are real; in Hegel’s baldest statement of what we would normally call “realism,” he asserts that “things of nature do not think and are not representations or thoughts” (*Enz.* § 246 *Zus.*).

But in scientific cognition, “things of nature” are not what I am interested in. Like an animal eating, I begin from them. Recall that in natural cognition, or sensation, the soul *finds* the determinations with which it deals: it “itself has not yet brought forth [its object, which is] internally or externally given and therefore not dependent on it” (*Enz.* § 399 *Zus.*). Since we, like animals, are sentient creatures, we do not create the objects we sense any more than animals create the objects they sense and eat; but as the words “not yet brought forth” in the quotation suggest, we also change what we sense—just as animals change what they eat. Sometimes, of course, we change what we sense practically in that we go ahead and consciously alter it, as when we cook food; but Hegel has something broader and more automatic in mind. In all human cognition, we “change” sensible objects when we derive concepts from them. This is an odd way of speaking, but it is fundamental enough to Hegel’s entire philosophy that some discussion of it is unavoidable.

The activity by which the mind turns sensible objects into concepts Hegel calls *Erinnerung*, an untranslatable word that commonly means “recollection” or “memory” but whose etymology suggests “inwardization,” which is how I will translate it here (see 19:44). He discusses it systematically at *Enz.* §§ 452–454, where he treats it psychologically, as an activity of the “intelligence” or of finite theoretical mind in general. As such an activity, inwardization is far more than ordinary memory. In a slightly earlier discussion Hegel tells us:

Intelligence familiarizes itself with things, not certainly in their sensible existence, but through the fact that it thinks them, it sets their content within itself; and in that it so to speak adds the form, the universality, to the practical ideality which is for it only negativity, it gives to the negativity of the singular an affirmative determinacy. (*Enz.* § 246 *Zus.*)

In another earlier discussion of inwardization, where he calls it “reflecting” (*Nachdenken*),<sup>6</sup> inwardization is also how we create and come to know universals:

Insofar as thinking is taken as active in relation to objects, as *reflecting on* something, the universal, as such the product of its activity, contains the value of the *thing* [*Sache*], the *essential*, the *inner*, the *true*. (*Enz.* § 21)

The sensible is something individual and transient; we get to know what is permanent in it via reflecting. (*Enz.* § 21 *Zus.*)

What is “essential, inner, and true” in an object is what is permanent in it; and the aim of inwardization, in a given case, is to ascertain what this is.

Inwardization is thus the activity of concept formation. On a definitionalist view, it is the activity in which we formulate and reformulate definitions for our words in light of new experiences, which gives its labors a broad field indeed.<sup>7</sup> Other passages show, however, that it is even broader than that:

This sublation of externality, which belongs to the concept of Spirit, is what we have called the “ideality” of it. All the activities of Spirit are nothing other than different ways of reducing what is external to the internality which is Spirit itself, and it is only through this reduction, this idealizing or assimilation of the external, that Spirit becomes and is Spirit. (*Enz.* § 381 *Zus.*; see also *Enz.* § 21)<sup>8</sup>

Inwardization thus approximates to the consumption and assimilation of external things in natural idealism;<sup>9</sup> indeed, all of nature performs it, though unconsciously:

Nature as such in its internalizing [*Selbstverinnerlichung*] does not attain to . . . consciousness of itself; . . . it is the human being which first raises itself above the individuality of sensation to the universality of thought. (*Enz.* § 381 *Zus.*)

Inwardization is clearly Hegel’s version of the Aristotelian *epagōgē*.<sup>10</sup> In it,

the sensations which crowd each other out do not, however, vanish absolutely without trace [*nicht absolut spurlos*], but remain in the soul as ideal moments. . . . Accordingly, even though the soul does not retain the content of sensation as a being for self, yet it does bear that content within it. (*Enz.* § 402 *Zus.*)

As with Aristotle, anything we experience leaves for Hegel “traces,” or what Aristotle calls *typoi*, in our mind. Some of those traces (*Spuren*) are caused by features that are more or less necessary to that thing and so are repeated in most or all experiences we have of it; other traces are more or less contingent and so do not recur as often. The latter do not impress themselves upon the soul as deeply as the former do and eventually drop away from the soul’s memory traces altogether. The being’s core features then stand out in relief; as this goes on, our memories lose the concreteness which refers them to the original perceptions from which they arose and gradually become increasingly abstract concepts. These concepts *automatically* capture what is permanent in the thing and so what is “essential, inner, and true” about it.

Thus, the first time I meet someone a great deal of information is typically conveyed to me by her appearance, dress, manner of speaking, the content of her speech, and so forth. When I encounter her on subsequent occasions, some

of these aspects will have changed, while others will not. Eventually my mental image of her contains just those aspects of her that have been repeatedly present: it is simpler than my first experiences of her but (so to speak) more essential. The necessary, “inner” features that really constitute her as a person have become evident and my “concept” of her better defined. As Hegel puts it in the *Lectures on Aesthetics*:

To the real existence of an act or a character belong many minor mediating circumstances and conditions, multifarious individual happenings and doings, whereas in the image of inwardization *all these contingencies are extinguished*. (13:248–249/189; emphasis added)

This “extinguishing of contingencies” is not, for Hegel any more than for Aristotle, something which has to be consciously undertaken; it includes the formation of habits (see *Enz.* §§ 409–410).<sup>11</sup> Like the forms of idealism previously discussed, cognitive idealism is not a conscious doctrine but an activity of the mind—one which is consonant with empirical realism. This enables Hegel’s version of idealism, Pickwickian as it may seem, to withstand what Robert Brandom (2002, 208) calls the “most fundamental objection” to idealism: “the thought that the world is always already there anyway, regardless of the activities, if any, of knowing and acting subjects.”<sup>12</sup>

This consonance also holds in the kind of case with which we began—when inwardization is consciously pursued—in the disciplined gaining of concepts and theories we call “science.” It is perhaps helpful, then, to compare it with what we might today call the overall scientific program of theory construction itself. There, we see that Hegel’s account of cognitive idealism applies even to what might seem most mercilessly to compete with it, the overall “realist” program in physics.

As Arthur Fine (1986, 95) characterizes it, this program is, first of all, “the program of trying to construct realist theories that, ideally, would be empirically adequate for all possible experimental data.” It is relatively easy to gloss the notion of empirical adequacy in the Hegelian terms of cognitive idealism. Experimental data are (ultimately) reports of sensations: a needle moving across a dial is what Hegel calls a “transient individual.” Scientific theories, however, are not about such transient individuals; they are more or less general. For a general conceptual construction or theory to be “adequate” to the relevant empirical data means, roughly, that it accurately captures, descriptively or explanatorily, not everything given in those experiences but those among the givens



which repeat themselves on different occasions. If a couple of the dozens of rats being run through a maze have a white spot on their left hind leg, we would not expect it in the experimental report; but if they all do, that fact should be noted. In other words, empirical adequacy demands that the concepts in the theory behave, at minimum, as if they had arisen by a process of inwardization which begins from a set of experiences (and so does not appeal beyond them) and simplifies that set by accurate repetition. What makes the program Fine is discussing here a “realist” program is that it requires a particular sort of conceptual model, namely one whose basic concepts bear a standard interpretation that does not refer to observers, acts of observation, and the like (94–95).

Realism in physics, then, requires the absence from the statement of a theory of all references to observers and their acts. That does not mean, of course, that in fact there were no observers or acts of observation, for then there would never have been a theory in the first place. All scientific practice is thus “idealistic” in Hegel’s sense, because it consists in consciously isolating the enduring, and so general, features of sensory experiences; but the final results of such practice can be either realist (when all references to observers and acts of observation are removed) or nonrealist (when they are not). Some theories are “idealistic” (nonrealistic) in their final formulation; but in Hegel’s sense, all theories are “idealistic” in their genesis.

In that it uses conceptual models at all and is concerned with their “ideal” adequacy to data, scientific realism is thus a case of idealism for Hegel—even though, in the end, it avoids reference to observing subjects. Its fundamental presupposition, indeed, is that things are appearances in Hegel’s sense: that scientifically relevant facts have the ground of their being in something other than themselves. This is why explanation is possible. True, the relevant “something other” for science is other facts plus the laws of nature, not Hegel’s “eternal,” “creative,” “universal,” and “divine” Idea; but then, we don’t yet know what that is.

### HUMAN IDEALISM III: PHILOSOPHICAL IDEALISM

Philosophy is a form of cognition, which for Hegel as for Kant is a practice: for Kant, one which first constitutes its objects by ordering them in space and time before bringing them under concepts, and for Hegel one which accepts spatio-temporal givens and then moves beyond them by creating the universals they are then seen to exemplify. The *doctrines* that Hegel associates with the highest form of idealism, philosophical idealism, are the general outcomes—the principles and

presuppositions—of this practice: “The assertion that the finite is ideal constitutes idealism [in general]. Idealism in philosophy consists in nothing other than not to recognize [*anerkennen*] the finite as a veritable [*wahrhaft*] being” (5:172/155).

The “ideality” of the finite, as we have seen, is the mutual interdependence of the unity and the plurality within a living thing. When we consciously take for our concern (*anerkennen*) that interdependence, rather than the thing as it presents itself in all its contingency, we are acting cognitively. The highest form of cognition for Hegel is philosophy, which is thus intrinsically idealistic: “Philosophy is comprehending [*begreifendes*] cognition insofar as in it everything which other forms of consciousness accept as a being and as something independent in its immediacy becomes known as an ideal moment” (*Enz.* § 160 *Zus.*).

Like natural science, philosophy operates as animals do when they consume objects: it takes beings which have independence and validity elsewhere and incorporates them, cognizing them as moments of the larger whole it produces and maintains—the “concept” (*Begriff*), or philosophical thought itself. This incorporation amounts to reconceiving (or, on a definitionalist reading, redefining) the fundamental concepts of science, religion, jurisprudence, and so forth in terms which themselves have already been produced by, and so are “moments” or parts of, the developing system. The abstractions which inwardization has already produced are thus further integrated into a single rational context, the philosophical system itself. As Terry Pinkard (1988, 105) has put it (without distinguishing philosophical idealism from the other kinds), “idealization is the integrating of things into the rational Idea, into the overall conceptual map of the world.”

Idealism as a philosophical doctrine thus relates to idealism as a practice in the same way that theories relate to theory construction. In its final formulation, a particular philosophy may eliminate reference to this foregoing work of comprehension, just as realistic programs in physics omit reference to the work of the scientists in observing and generalizing, but this does not mean that the work was not done, any more than in physics. Those who are correctly classified both as philosophers and as non-idealists of one sort or another are thus engaging in the activity of idealism while avoiding reference to it in their final theoretical formulations. As Robert Wallace (2005, 95) points out, this provides Hegel with a riposte to “materialist” critics such as Feuerbach and Marx: they are idealists too, for *all* philosophy, like all natural science, is idealism—either explicitly or implicitly: “Every philosophy is idealism, or at least has that for its principle, and the question is then only to what extent this principle is really carried through” (5:172/155).

## THE HISTORY OF IDEALISM

What distinguishes Spirit from nature, in Hegel's view, is that nature does not exhibit historical development. As he puts it in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*: "Changes in nature, however infinitely manifold they are, show only a cycle which always repeats itself; in nature, nothing new happens under the sun" (12:74). A natural law always operates in just the same way. If it were a natural law that water freezes at 32°, then the water in a sink in Lusaka, in Lake Superior, and in our bodily tissues would all freeze at 32°—always. Since a natural law never changes, it is in particular unaffected by its own cases. In Spirit, by contrast, particular instances of the operation of a law can change the law itself—as if, when my tissues froze on some occasion, that event itself somehow changed the freezing point of water. This is already asserted in the *Phenomenology*, for as the introduction tells us (3:68–81/46–57), the general "certainties" with which each section begins are abandoned when Spirit, or consciousness, runs up against anomalies to them. Instead of an unchanging law, on the one hand, and a number of events which transpire in accordance with it, on the other, we have in the *Phenomenology* a kind of "law" which changes in response to certain events which transpire in accordance with it. Because Spirit transforms its own "laws" in this way, it not merely contrasts with nature but is actively *opposed* to nature (see *Enz.* § 410 *Zus.*). Nature, in human affairs, is the force which would keep us doing things the same old way, no matter what happens. Spirit must fight against this in order to develop. The name of that fight, for Hegel, is "history."

To understand philosophical idealism in greater detail, then, we must turn to its history; and part of Hegel's intent, in talking about idealism at all, is to engage with that history. His engagement, in fact, is a battle against a false but prevalent view of what idealism is:

It is often said that idealism is this: that the individual generates all its representations, even the most immediate, out of itself, that it posits everything out of itself. This, however, is an unhistorical and completely false representation. The way this crude representation defines idealism, there has in fact never been an idealist among philosophers. (19:54–55)

So all philosophers are idealists in Hegel's practical sense, but none are in this commonly accepted sense. The reason for the former was explained in the previous section: even realists are idealists. The reason for the latter is obvious from the quote above: if it is a presupposition of science that things of nature can be ex-

plained, it is a presupposition of philosophy that thought can be regulated. If each individual generates “everything” out of herself, she generates not only immediate presentations but what Kant would call the rules of their synthesis. Anything goes, and everyone is entitled to speak a private language.<sup>13</sup> Such unregulated discourse is clearly not philosophy at all, though we will see that Hegel thinks it is being propagated under that name, in his day, by certain “followers” of Kant.

Since all philosophy is idealistic, it is only to be expected that the history of philosophical idealism should begin with Thales (18:195–209). His statement that *panta hydōr*, “all things [are] water,” is a case of what might be called idealism-in-principle, for its overt import, at first glance anyway, is wholly realistic. It seems to be saying that a substance of one natural kind is the ground of everything else.

But the cognitive activity which produces this statement is a case of inwardization. This is such an important fact about it that when Aristotle discusses Thales in the *Metaphysics*, his first move is to reconstruct the process by which Thales must have come to the conclusion that “all things are water”:

Thales . . . says that the principle [archē] is water . . . getting the supposition [*hypolēpsis*] perhaps from seeing that the nutriment of all things is moist, and that heat itself is generated from the moist and kept alive by it. He got the notion from this fact and from the fact that the seeds of all things have a moist nature, and that water is the origin of the nature of moist things. (*Metaphysics* 1.3.983b20–27)

Water-as-the-underlying-essence-of-all-things is thus not identical with water-as-an-empirical-given-among-others; it is a “supposition,” that is, a thought. Thales has produced it by reducing, or “inwardizing,” various perceptual experiences (of seeds and nutrition) to their permanent feature, moistness. “Water” in this sense designates not merely one natural kind among others but what is claimed to be the unifying trait in all experience—and thus is what Hegel calls “ideal” (see 5:172/155). As Hegel goes on to tell us, this holds for *all* the basic concepts of Presocratic philosophy. Things like matter and atoms are also, first of all, thoughts abstracted from experience; to say that they are the underlying essence of natural things is to say that natural things are, essentially or *wahrhaftig*, thoughts.

Thales looks like a materialist, to be sure, because he does not clearly distinguish the two senses in which he is using the term “water.” By the time we get to Leucippus, things have gotten a little clearer: atoms are invisible and so

accessible *only* to thought, and unlike Thalesian water cannot be confused with anything we actually sense (18:359). It is Plato, however, who first clearly grasps the fact that the general truths which underlie sensible reality are thoughts—the Platonic ideas. Because Plato sees that the ideal realm is an affair of thought and because thought as dialectical includes making distinctions, ultimate reality for Plato is not merely a simple thought such as “water” or “matter” or even “atoms” but is an entire *wissenschaftliches Ganze*—a rationally articulated whole (19:11).<sup>14</sup>

While the Platonic ideas are thoughts, they are not *our* thoughts. Plato wrongly views his ideas as existing independently of finite minds and so of reality altogether: “The Platonic idea . . . remains fixed in the mere in-itself. . . . The [true] Idea must move forward into reality and obtains that only through real subjectivity which is constituted according to the concept and ideal being-for-self” (13:191/143). Plato is thus clearer than the Presocratics on what it means for true reality to be thought itself. As thought, such reality is apprehended rationally, which means that its content is also viewed as rational, as a rationally organized whole. But for Plato, such reality is unchanging and so is apprehended, rather than generated, by thought. Hegel’s (true) Idea, as opposed to a Platonic idea, is not fixed and (somehow) becomes real, which means that it does not have the unchanging, eternal reality which Plato assigns to the ideas. It is, rather, intrinsically dynamic, and the dynamism comes from “subjectivity constituted according to the concept,” that is, from humans thinking rationally; it is in their thought that the Idea attains an ideal existence on its own account, or what Hegel calls being-for-self.

The Skeptics fell back from Plato in that they posited the process of inwardization but did not end it with any determinate content at all; rather, the basic procedure of ancient Skepticism is to show that for any content which is attributed to the basic reality, be that reality viewed as perceived or thought, there is another, opposed content (19:373). This very dynamism, however, constitutes for Hegel a sort of “objectivity.” To be philosophically “subjective” for him, as the *Phenomenology*’s opening section on *Meinen* in “Sense-Certainty” illustrates (3:82–92/58–66), is to maintain some personal fancy as absolutely true. If my thoughts are constantly generating their own opposites, however, I cannot cling to any of them as absolute—and so I achieve a measure of “objectivity.”

Skepticism was the last approach in ancient philosophy to be idealistic in a significant Hegelian sense; Plotinus, who as I suggested above appears to stand close to Hegel on the nature of idealism, was in particular too “figurative” (*bildlich*; 19:463) in his philosophy to make serious contributions.

If Skepticism, with its abandonment of rational content, was already a step back from Platonism in the development of idealism, the medieval “realists” represent another step back from the Skeptics. The content of the realists’ ideal order is not only philosophically unjustified, coming as it does from revelation, it is also, like the Platonic ideas, unchanging. It remains, however, ideal. The medieval realists, followers of Plato, were thus precisely what Hegel calls “idealists”; their opponents, the nominalists, do not deserve in Hegel’s view to be called philosophers (19:571–572).

Modern philosophy is often viewed as beginning with the self-assertion of untrammelled thought by Descartes, but for Hegel—from the perspective of idealism, anyway—this is not accurate, because the modern version of freedom of thought is defined in terms of the more basic distinction between thought and nature: “The principle of modern philosophy is therefore not an unconstrained thinking, but has the opposition of thought and nature before it” (20:65). For Descartes (and, apparently, modern philosophers in general), thought is therefore free only insofar as it is non-natural. But in order for this freedom to be understood clearly, the character of the opposition between thought and nature must be understood, and that requires knowing what they have in common. Modern philosophy, beginning from the absolute division of everything into thought and nature, thus has a drive to bridge that distinction. Since the division is taken to be absolute, however, the bridge has to be thrown from one side or the other: either thought or nature has to be taken as basic, with the other a modification of it.

Philosophy therefore falls into the two basic forms of dissolution of this opposition into a realistic and an idealistic philosophizing—that is, into a sort of philosophy which allows the objectivity and content of reflection [*des Gedenkens*] out of perceptions, and another sort which proceeds from the independence of thought. (20:66)

These two approaches are commonly called “empiricism” and “rationalism,” respectively.

The difficulty of throwing the bridge from the side of empiricism is shown by Berkeley. In virtue of Berkeley’s fundamental principle that *esse est percipi* (20:271), external reality has indeed “disappeared” from his philosophical cosmos (20:272); but Berkeley’s idealism is still limited:

Berkeley does not take idealism in [a strongly] subjective sense, but only to the extent that [he claims] that it is spirits [not material substances] which commu-

nicate to us (the Other is itself a being which forms representations) and so, that it is only God who brings forth representations. (20:273)

Berkeley thus maintains a distinction between the representations that we actively produce out of ourselves (*mit Selbstätigkeit überhaupt aus uns erzeugt sind*; 20:273) and those that are produced in us by God without our contribution. The latter have objective validity and constitute Berkeley's attempt to formulate a concept of the in-itself (*ansich*).

This attempt to throw a bridge from the mind to objective reality fails, however, because of Berkeley's empiricism. That all knowledge comes from experience means for Berkeley, as for other empiricists, that reason has no content of its own, and this renders his idealism "formal." The content which we perceive—even that which is generated by God—is, as sensible, merely contingent. Philosophy therefore has nothing to say about it beyond humdrum invocations of the difference between the subjective and the objective, with the latter being simply assigned, somehow, to God. Berkeley thus fails to carry his idealism through to a genuine, that is to say, concrete rapprochement between subject and object and so is "inconsequent": he cannot think his thought through to the end. It is God who must make up the deficiency in Berkeley's approach and who shoulders "the *inkonsequenz* of this system" (20:273).<sup>15</sup>

The rationalistic approach, for its part, culminates in the Leibnizian monad. Everything in such a monad is a presentation, a *Vorstellung*; and since the monad contains a plurality of these, it is itself a universal. But the monad's presentations, for Leibniz, follow one another in time; this universal is thus "a simplicity which is at the same time alteration, movement of plurality" (20:242). Leibnizian (and Wolffian) rationalism thus has also not solved the basic problem of modern philosophy, for it continues to privilege one side of the dichotomy between nature and thought; individual things are not independent beings from which thought begins, as they will be for Hegel, but are presentations, intellectual entities from the start. The good side of this idealism is that movement is finally introduced into the ideal realm; the bad side is that the ideal realm, ultimately, is all that there is.

### KANT AND "BAD IDEALISM"

This has all set the stage for the emergence of what Hegel, in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, recurrently calls "bad" idealism (18:368, 405–406, 440; 19:11, 54). Bad idealism is nothing other than the "unhistorical and completely

false” view of idealism which we have already seen him denounce, the view that “the individual generates [*erzeugt*] all its representations, even the most immediate, out of itself, that it posits everything out of itself” (19:54). This form of idealism—and only this form—maintains that both the form and content of our cognition belong to the subject, a view which Hegel—with a *perhaps* significant change in wording—also attributes to Kant: “His philosophy is *subjective idealism* inasmuch as the *ego* (the cognizing subject) furnishes (*liefert*) both the *form* and the *material*—the former as *thinking* and the latter as *perceiving*” (*Enz.* § 42 *Zus.* 3). Whether there is a difference between “generating” and “furnishing” is the question as to whether Kant is himself a bad idealist or merely their fore-runner. An answer would, it seems, be provided by a more complete discussion of Kant’s notion of sensible receptivity than Hegel gives (at 20:339–343).

In fact, Hegel does not appear to be interested in providing that answer, for he has many opportunities to do so and never does. His account of idealism after Kant is the narrative not of a series of distinct philosophical positions but of a confused slide in which the main figures are Kant himself, then Fichte, and finally Hegel’s contemporaries Friedrich Bouterwerk, Jakob Friedrich Fries, and Wilhelm Traugott Krug. Just what the different positions are along this slide, and who occupies them, is impossible to tell from Hegel’s texts. What seems clear is that Kant’s philosophical approach, in Hegel’s view, comes to be shared by a variety of others; that the changes it undergoes in this are not philosophically fundamental; and that they nonetheless represent an accelerating moral decline so severe that it ends in a philosophy which is not merely “bad” but evil.

As we will see from his treatment of Fries, it is philosophically urgent for Hegel to combat this whole approach, in part by restoring “idealism” to its proper philosophical meaning. This explains two things about Hegel’s treatment of Kant himself. For one, Hegel’s criticisms of Kant, particularly when it comes to “idealism,” are often designed to hit Fichte, Bouterwerk, Fries, and Krug as well; it is as if someone studying the roots of a tree described them only in terms that also applied to the branches. I noted in Chapter 1 that Hegel’s treatment of Kant is not only general but loose; the urgency of Hegel’s self-perceived battle against “bad idealism” explains much of the looseness. To make nice distinctions among men such as Bouterwerk, Fries, and Krug would be like arguing with a wolf pack, and not only Fichte but Kant himself gets caught up in this urgency.

I will begin, then, with what we have just seen Hegel specifically attribute to Kant: the contents of sensibility, whether they are generated by the subject or received by it, are for Kant “subjective and only subjective” (20:339); as we



saw Kant say at the beginning of this chapter, they are modifications or basic states of our sensibility. According to Hegel's discussion of Kantian idealism at *Enz.* § 45 *Zus.*, this subjectivity follows from two claims about the contents of our sensory experience. One of these is correct, namely Kant's claim that what we sense is appearances rather than things in themselves; that indeed is an "important result of the Kantian philosophy." The incorrect claim is that to be an appearance is to inhere in a subject:<sup>16</sup>

The objects of which we have immediate knowledge [are] mere appearances, that is, they have the ground of their being not in themselves, but in an other. At this point, everything depends on how that other is construed [*bestimmt*]. (*Enz.* § 45 *Zus.*)

Kant has misdefined "appearance." For him, it is part of the notion of an appearance that it be dependent on our minds. Hegel's definition, by contrast, is more general: to be an appearance is merely to have the ground of your being in *something* other than yourself, and the nature of that "something" can be variously construed. The relevant options here, Hegel goes on, are to view the other in question either as the perceiving subject or as what we have seen him call the "universal divine idea." Kant takes the former path: "According to the Kantian philosophy the things of which we have knowledge are only appearance *for us*, while the *in-itself* of those things remains for us a beyond which is inaccessible to us" (*Enz.* § 45 *Zus.*). The other path is Hegel's own "absolute idealism," which holds that "the things of which we have immediate knowledge are not only appearances *for us* but *in themselves* mere appearances . . . and have the ground of their being not in themselves but in the universal divine Idea" (*ibid.*).<sup>17</sup>

Kant's need for the thing in itself thus, as we saw in Chapter 2, goes together with the subjective nature of his idealism: having located all content within the subject, all that is left for objectivity, in the sense of mind-independent reality, is the empty and inaccessible beyond of the *Ding-an-sich* (5:41/147; *Enz.* § 45 *Zus.*). Kant therefore does not solve the underlying problematic of modern philosophy, that of overcoming the distinction between nature and thought. Indeed, he has both absolutized the split between the two and rendered it inscrutable; for "nothing at all turns on this distinction between subjectivity and objectivity" (*Enz.* § 42 *Zus.* 3; 8:119).

The next move in the slide comes through the contrast between the Kantian view of objects as appearances and the "ordinary" view of them. "Ordinary," unphilosophical consciousness views objects "in their individuation as inde-

pendent and self-concerned, and insofar as they show themselves to be related to one another and conditioned by one another, this mutual dependence of objects on one another is viewed as something external to them, not as something belonging to their essence" (*Enz.* § 45 *Zus.*). In Kantian idealism, by contrast, individual sensory things, as appearances for us, are "essentially" related only to the perceiving subject, in the sense that it alone is responsible for what they are. The inscrutable thing in itself, the other candidate, is incapable of grounding one thing rather than another, and so is incapable of being the "essential" ground of anything. Just one essential relation is therefore allowed to such a thing: its relation, as a complex of representations, to the subject. It is only through our understanding, for example, that things stand in causal relations to one another (20:346–347); a being unperceivable by us—a thing in itself—has no such relations to other things.

This criticism of Kant is reminiscent of Heidegger's account of how, in modernity, the world became a "picture" in which all that matters is what we posit (Heidegger 1963c *passim*). It holds whether Kant maintained that all representations are "generated" by the subject, a view which Hegel will clearly attribute to Fichte, or merely "furnished" by it in some other (possibly more Kantian) sense. Either view leads to a form of idealism which, according to the *Phenomenology*,

fancies that by pointing out this pure "mine" of consciousness in all Being, and declaring things to be perceptions [*Empfindungen*] or representations, it has shown it to be all reality. This idealism must then at the same time be absolute empiricism, for in order to fill out the empty "mine," i.e. establish its distinctness [*Unterschied*] and all its development and formation, [this empty] reason requires a foreign impulse [*fremden Anstoßes*] in which alone the multiplicity of perceiving or representing would lie. (3:184/144)<sup>18</sup>

This empty version of idealism, the next phase of the slide Hegel is portraying, is idealism which "thinks itself to be finished with what is objective once it relates this to consciousness and says of it only that 'it is my sensation, *mine*'" (18:368).

Such "absolutely empirical" idealism thus "flees and fears" objects in general (5:45). When pursued exclusively, it does not allow even for inwardization, for on the level of consciousness inwardization is impelled by the relations objects have to one another:

As an objective consciousness I certainly have, in the first instance, an immediate sensation, but at the same time the sensed object is for me a point in the universal context of things and thereby is something which refers beyond its

sensible individuality and immediate presence. . . . Consciousness actualizes its independence from the material of sensibility through raising it out of the form of individuality to that of universality, while holding fast to what is essential in it and leaving out what is purely contingent and indifferent; through this transformation what is sensed becomes something represented. (*Enz.* § 402 *Zus.*)

It is the need to understand the relations of an experienced thing to other things (including later experiences of it) which leads me consciously to abstract out the properties of the first thing and get clear on them—for I cannot establish any kind of relation among things without seeing how they are alike and how they differ. Thus, on the one hand, reason, in the empty form of the “mine,” is present in “absolute empiricism,” which qualifies such empiricism as a form of idealism (and so of philosophy). On the other hand, inwardization, which as we saw is the activity of idealism itself, is stymied; hence, the *Phenomenology* tells us, this standpoint is self-contradictory (3:185/145).

Because bad idealism begins and ends with the simple declaration that everything of which we are aware is “mine,” or within the subject, it has nothing to say about the content of sensation, and this is no minor shortcoming. Nothing, we saw, turns on the mere formal distinction between subjectivity and objectivity; “it is [instead] the content on which everything turns” (*Enz.* § 42 *Zus.* 3).

The slide to bad idealism thus occurs as follows: Kant declares that both the form and the content of sensibility are “furnished” by the cognizing subject, which makes them merely appearances for us. This means that the only essential relation they have is to us, as cognizing subjects; this means that the only thing to be said about them philosophically is that they are “mine.” This, finally, is bad idealism, which maintains that the form and content of sensibility are “generated” by the subject.

Is bad idealism still Kant? Hegel’s reference to *fremder Anstoß* (at 3:184/144, quoted above) suggests otherwise, for the phrase is profoundly associated with Fichte.<sup>19</sup> The distinction between Kant and Fichte, however, may in the present context be without a difference for Hegel, who agrees with Fichte (against Kant’s strenuous protests)<sup>20</sup> that Fichte’s philosophy is the “completion” (*Vollendung*) of Kant’s (20:387, 413; see also 407). He never misses a chance, in his discussion of Fichte in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, to point out that Fichte’s views are really the same as Kant’s.<sup>21</sup> In Fichte’s earlier writings, Hegel says, his distinctive contribution is to give Kant’s insights a systematic form; in his later writings, he tries to give them a popular expression (20:388–389). Thus,

Fichte's idealism, like Kant's (see *Enz.* § 42 *Zus.* 3) is subjective: "The ego . . . produces [*hervorbringt*] all determinations of representation and thought, but [it does so] unconsciously. . . . That I posit [all these things] is known only to philosophical consciousness" (20:400).

The gap between philosophical and popular consciousness, between what the philosopher knows and what others know, is never filled by Fichte. In spite of his later efforts, the sense in which objects of experience are mere "appearances" remains foreign to ordinary consciousness, and philosophical knowledge remains the possession of a privileged few. This is because Fichte's own pursuit of concrete philosophical knowledge is flawed. Its basic principle is the abstract ego (10:394–395), which, being abstract, cannot go forward and is "fixed" (20:399, 408, 410).

Fichte's attempt to formulate a concrete philosophy dealing with practical matters comes in, accordingly, for harsh judgment:

The Fichtean deduction of legal [*rechtlich*] and moral concepts likewise remains in the limits of self-consciousness and the inflexibility of the understanding. . . . The entire presentation of the state has for its main theme that the freedom of the individual must be limited through universal freedom. . . . Prison and bonds loom ever larger, instead of the state being grasped as the realization of freedom. It [all] moves forward with limited understanding—natural law is especially misconceived; he deduces even nature, insofar as he needs it—a movement forth, but with no ideas. (20:412–413)

Individual and state cannot mutually form and enrich one another as we will see them do in Hegel's account of ethical life in the *Philosophy of Right*, but can only circumscribe one another in rigid opposition. Hegel not only rejects this view but despises it, and his discussions of Fichte's social philosophy can on occasion become derisive: the "complete foolishness, to say the word," of Fichte's social philosophy meant that no one could stay with his system (20:415).<sup>22</sup>

The harshness of Hegel's judgment of Fichte is, however, nothing compared to his judgment on the three followers of Kant and Fichte (and Hegel's own contemporaries), Fries, Bouterwerk, and Krug. For in their hands, "bad" idealism actually becomes evil.

This word is not lightly chosen. Evil, writes Hegel in the *Science of Logic*, is a concrete form of what is there called the "exclusion of the One" (5:190–193/170–173). This occurs when we have a plurality of units, Ones, which are qualitatively identical and can therefore maintain their separate existence only by a

rigid repulsion in which each One posits its other as *merely* its other. Since, in its true nature, it is the same as that other, this repulsion is a denial of the One's own true nature: a dynamic denial, which, expressed abstractly, is a "loss of inner meaning." This loss is presented in "Being-for-Self," the generic heading under which "the One" appears in the *Logic*. The "inner meaning" in question is that gained in the section of the *Logic* just previous to "Being-for-Self," that of "Infinity" (5:149–166/137–156).

If infinitude is lost, only the finite remains. The "loss of inner meaning" therefore results not in an empty repulsion or exclusion but in an affirmation of merely meaningless finitude—of non-essential, indeed silly, content which, as such, cannot be comprehended philosophically. This series of meaningless affirmations is then essential to the ongoing identity of the "one" who affirms it, for it is only by that affirmation that it can establish its difference from the "other" and thereby exclude it. "Evil" for Hegel is thus the rejection of others on a trivial basis—and, since at bottom we are all human beings, the basis for exclusion is *always* trivial.

Hegel's awareness of this sort of affirmation, and of the inability of his future system to comprehend it, is announced in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*:

This vanity, which understands how to frustrate every truth and to return from truth to itself, and which revels in this understanding; which always knows how to dissolve all thoughts and, instead of any content, to find only [its own] jejune ego; is a satisfaction which must be left to itself; for it flees the universal and seeks only being-for-self. (3:75/52)

If bad idealism brings such vanity into philosophy, then the battle against it is urgent and the stakes are high. And that, alas, has actually happened, as we can see from Hegel's treatment of Jakob Fries.<sup>23</sup> Fries had undertaken to naturalize Kant by grounding our knowledge of our minds in our experience of them. Philosophy is thus to begin from a descriptive account of consciousness, which reveals that we have a "feeling of truth" (*Wahrheitsgefühl*) which validates reason itself.<sup>24</sup> In Hegel's view, this amounted to basing philosophy on what might be little more than personal prejudice: "The chief tendency of [Fries's] superficial philosophy is to base science not on the development of thought and the concept but on immediate perception and contingent imagination" (7:18–19/15; see also 20:418–419). Fries was, in Hegel's view, both personally and philosophically evil. Hegel came up against him during his two-year stay at Heidelberg (1816–1818), where Shlomo Avineri (1963) has documented Hegel's probable

role in opening up the student league at Heidelberg to Jewish students. The main ally, among the professoriate, of the anti-Semitic students was none other than Fries—a fact to which Hegel himself alludes in the preface to the *Philosophy of Right* (7:18–19/15–17). Hegel does not even accord to Fries the dignity of a philosophical refutation; his attacks on him are merely rhetorical. In the text just mentioned, Fries is the “generalissimo of the hosts of superficiality” who “bases philosophical science . . . on immediate sense-perception and the play of fancy”; after several similar sentences, Hegel concludes by quoting Goethe at Fries: “You have surrendered to the devil / And must surely perish” (7:19/16). Fries cannot even get along with others of his ilk. Unable to make positive discoveries, they write polemics against each other: “ils se sont battus les flancs pour être de grands hommes” (20:387). His thought is “subjectivity of arbitrary will, ignorance; . . . comfortable . . . lazy reason.” In it, “everything was rested upon particular subjectivity; each was haughty and contemptuous of others” (20:418–420). His philosophy, a “brew of plundered ideas,” is said in the *Encyclopedia* to be “the opposite of truth,” with which no “reasonable human being” (*sinniger Mensch*—Hegel is apparently thinking of intelligent students momentarily seduced by Fries) will stay for long (*Enz.* § 456 *Zus.*; see also 20:402–403). Where for Kant the forms of understanding could not inform us about things in themselves and were therefore (in Hegel’s word) “untrue” (5:40/47), for Fries and his ilk the contents of consciousness are all that counts.

Hegel’s refusal to engage Fries on a philosophical level is as striking as the violence of his rhetoric. Fries was important, Hegel would have had to admit, if not as a philosopher then as a significant academic rationalizer of Jewish oppression, a personal opponent of Hegel’s at Heidelberg, and a political one elsewhere. Hegel knew he was important: Hegel’s early biographer J. K. F. Rosenkranz reports that Hegel tried to close down the *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung* after it defended Fries against him. Hegel wrote to the Prussian Ministry of Education about the dangers of too much freedom of the press; what enraged him was the *Literaturzeitung*’s accusation that he had earlier attacked Fries personally. As Rosenkranz reports, Hegel “claimed that he had not been thinking of Fries as a private individual, but only of his ruinous principles.”<sup>25</sup> The claim, in view of the passages already cited and the personal history Avineri uncovers, is unconvincing.

In any case, Hegel does not attempt to tell us what the “ruinous philosophical principles” actually are, let alone tell why they are ruinous. He makes no effort to demonstrate Fries’s errors in any detail to others, let alone try to com-

prehend the Friesian “brew” in his system—any more than he does with Krug in his derisive 1802 review of him.<sup>26</sup> Fries’s philosophy is, we may say, not a “form of finite thought” which calls for philosophical comprehension but a deformation of narrow thoughtlessness. It will defeat any attempt to comprehend philosophically its mishmash of ideas, for the simple reason that such comprehension would have to descend to its level. In any case (as the past tense in the quote from Goethe above indicates), the philosophy will self-destruct, as does the excluding One: “since their negating effects nothing . . . they do not return to themselves, do not maintain themselves, and are not” (5:192/171).

When we put all this together, we see that Fries is not for Hegel a philosopher like the rest, to be critically comprehended. He and his philosophy are not merely retrograde but downright evil; and he must be fought with urgency and all possible means, even to the extent of getting the government to deny him a platform. How did this happen? How does Kant’s transcendental idealism become something so evil?

The answer lies in what for Hegel is the core of Kant’s idealism: the view that things are merely appearances for us. This led to the view that the only essential relation a thing has is to the consciousness which cognizes it, which in turn meant that all philosophy has to say about things is that they are “mine.” When Fichte tried to go beyond this abstract starting point, he not only failed but was widely seen to have failed, and spectacularly. The need to remedy his failure was widely felt, but the only place to go was to what Fichte and Kant had established as basic: the conscious ego (20:415). This was what then allowed Fries, Bouterwerk, and Krug to base their philosophies not on the kind of abstract account of self-consciousness advanced by Kant and Fichte but on concrete contents of consciousness assumed to be indubitable—what they called the “facts of consciousness.” Anyone who disagreed with one’s own “facts of consciousness” was therefore excluded. In Fries’s case, this included Jews.

This, then, could be called the “tragedy” of Kant (we will see another aspect of this tragedy at the end of the book). His idealism was by turns philosophically rigorous and “psychologistic.” When systematically reformulated by Fichte so that its problems were evident, it provided both the need and the means for idealism to become “bad,” that is, wholly psychologistic, and for philosophy to become evil. Whether and how far this was a development or a betrayal of Kant is unimportant to Hegel, because in either case the problem is with the very core of Kant’s idealism: the view that appearances are only appearances for us opened the door to bad idealism and evil philosophy.

But if Kant looks good in comparison with those who come after him, he suffers by comparison with his predecessors. In proclaiming the content of our experience to be merely subjective, Kant has fallen back behind Leibniz, for whom our representations were not deprived of objective being but contained it. He has also compounded the error of Plato and the medieval realists. Where they regarded universals as unchanging, Kant describes the understanding as if it were a thing in itself, assigning the categories to it as if it were an atemporal noumenon (5:40/47). Plato, then, was a better idealist than Kant, as were the Skeptics, the medieval realists, and Leibniz: "If one remains with the thought that the ego is what posits, then we have the bad idealism of modern times. In previous times, one thought and did not remain with the view that what is thought is bad because I posit it, because it is something subjective" (18:405–406).

In Hegel's history of idealism, as in his history of Skepticism (for which see Forster 1989, 9–43), it is the ancients who have the upper hand. Views of Hegel which take him to construe history as a story of steady dialectical progress, from the lispering thought of the ancients to the conceptual grandeur of nineteenth-century Berlin, are seriously oversimplified. Hegel is clearly trying here to unify the ancients and the moderns—a basic trait of his philosophical enterprise, as Allen Wood (1993, 211) has noted (in a passage I quoted in Chapter 1): "Hegel's philosophy is an attempt to renew classical philosophy, especially the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, within the philosophical tradition begun with Kant."

But Wood is wrong about Hegel's stance in attempting this unification. If the tradition begun by Kant is transcendental idealism, Hegel is not remaining "within" it. He takes idealism to be a philosophical program rather than a philosophical doctrine, and one which embraces many forms of realism as well as of idealism. He has, moreover, rejected what he identifies as the core principle of Kant's idealistic doctrine: the view that appearances are appearances only for us. Hegel is attempting to locate the insights of Kant and other modern philosophers within a basically Greek philosophical stance which has been rendered not Kantian but dialectical.

## THE PROBLEM

It is now clear that we cannot hope to understand Hegel's criticisms of Kant's idealism without understanding Hegel's alternative to it. In formulating that alternative, as we have seen, Hegel redefines two Kantian terms: "idealism" itself



and “appearance.” These redefinitions are not explicitly argued for in Hegel’s texts, but we can at least see where they are coming from.

In criticizing the modern, “subjectivistic” definition of idealism, Hegel calls it an “unhistorical and completely false representation.” He goes on to say (hyperbolically, if one considers Fichte a philosopher) that there has never been such an “idealist” among philosophers. The argument in this case, then, is an historical one: defining idealism as the claim that reality is mind dependent obscures its historical origins among the ancient philosophers (as well as the way in which nature itself is “idealistic”). Hegel’s competing definition of idealism as the program of according true value only to universals created by the mind, in contrast, applies to philosophers from Thales on, as well as, *mutatis mutandis*, within the animal kingdom.

No such historical warrant is available for Hegel’s redefinition of “appearance” as that which has the ground of its existence in another. The distinction between appearances for us and appearances in themselves is absent not only from Kant but from the history of philosophy in general; indeed, it hardly seems to make sense. If, however, we cast back not to the history of philosophy but to Hegel’s own *Science of Logic*, its origin is clear.

The very presence of “appearance” as a determination of Hegel’s *Logic* means, to begin with, that appearances cannot be restricted to the subject, because the *Logic* is supposed to be the examination of structures which apply equally to mind and reality.<sup>27</sup> In fact, Hegel’s logical account of appearance contrasts it not with the cognizing subject but with essence: “Appearance is at first essence in its existence” (6:148/499)—“existence” being the term previously defined in the *Logic* and “essence” being the name for the entire section. When the *Logic* finally comes to comprehend the distinction between appearances and the in-itself, it again makes no appeal to the cognizing subject. Rather, it separates off the unchanging aspects of appearance—its “laws”—which then become the “absolute other” of the changing component (6:156–159/505–507).

An appearance, according to the *Logic*, is thus something which does not stand on its own and so has the “ground of its existence” in something else—in an “essence” of one sort or another. If we take that essence to be the cognizing subject, we have adopted Kantian subjective idealism and are on the way to bad idealism and evil philosophy. It would be far more promising, then, to construe the “other” in question as the “universal divine idea”—if we knew what that was.

In order to understand what it is, it will be helpful to establish the status of the ideas, also universal, into which the mind idealizes sensible objects and

which constitute their “warhaft” existence. Here yet again, we have a problem. Plato, we have seen, was wrong to assume that his Forms existed independently of human thought and the “real subject”; but Kant was also wrong to place them entirely within the subject. Hegel makes both points vigorously at *Enz.* § 246 *Zus.* With Plato and the medieval realists, he says:

The universal aspect of things is not something subjective, that could be attributed to us; rather as a noumenon opposed to the transitory phenomenon it is the true, objective, actuality of the things themselves, which exist like the Platonic ideas, which are not somewhere in the distance but in individual things as their substantial genera. (*Enz.* § 246 *Zus.*)

But with Kant and the empiricists he says:

In that we think things we transform them into something universal—but things are singular and the lion as such does not exist. We make things into something subjective, something produced by us, something that belongs to us, and indeed peculiar to us qua human beings; for things of nature do not think and are not representations or thoughts. (*Enz.* § 246 *Zus.*)

Where is the lion as such? It does not exist—and yet, paradoxically, it is the “true, objective, actual” in lions. Is this a contradiction Hegel can resolve, or one that he must live with? Clearly, it is one he recognizes:

We find the theoretical approach contradicting itself, in that it immediately seems to bring about the reverse of what it intends: namely, we want to know nature that really is, not nature which is not; but instead now of leaving nature as it is and taking it as it truly is, we make it into something entirely different. (*Enz.* § 246 *Zus.*)

We want to know nature as it really is, as individuals; but in trying to do so we make something completely different out of it, namely universals. To state the contradiction in this way is to show how Hegel hopes to resolve it: by looking at individual sensible things and their essences as the beginnings and ends, respectively, of a process—the process of “inwardization” which we considered earlier. In inwardization, the everyday content of experience—the claws of the lion, the warmth of fires, the value of property—are freed of their passing embodiments; the characters common to those embodiments on different occasions are universalized. The resulting universals are thus automatically both objective and subjective: they are the results of a kind of collaboration between

experience, which exhibits regularities, and thought, which seizes upon them. The content is objective and individual at the beginning of the process, subjectivized and universal at its end.

But the invocation of this process does not solve the problem, which can be rephrased as: How can the universal be both the result of human cognitive activity and the ground of things which, Hegel has told us, are mind independent? The “universal idea” must be divine indeed, if the products of its thought are the natures of things.

### NONTHEOLOGICAL SOLUTION

Since philosophy is a higher stage than religion in Hegel’s system, we can take it as a general principle that Hegel does not like theological solutions to philosophical problems. We have seen him criticize Berkeley for making God the guarantor of objectivity; but if Hegel here were to claim that it is God who guarantees that the universals we happen to reach by inwardization are the true natures of things, would he be doing anything different? I will argue that Hegel does not need to appeal to a divine mind, or claim that it is somehow “participated in” by the philosopher (see the previous chapter), to solve this problem. The solution is provided by what I will call the “idealism of language.”

To see how this works we can begin by noting that realism is not only unphilosophical for Hegel but cannot even be coherently formulated. In the *Phenomenology*’s opening section on “Sense-Certainty,” just after the Eleusinian “joke” which I quoted earlier, Hegel argues that “actual, absolutely individual, totally personal individual things”—the kind of things sense-certainty takes for final truth—not only are not true but cannot even be spoken of (or even, famously, be pointed at), because words convey only universals (3:91–92/65–66). To put this in the terms of Aristotle’s *Categories*, from which it clearly derives, the white that is “present in” an individual golf ball is a unique color, dependent on surrounding colors and the ever-changing play of light, and is thus different from what is “said of” the golf ball when we say that it is white—a predicate which applies to many other things in many other circumstances. Speech thus has what Hegel, in the *Phenomenology*, calls the “divine” character (3:92/66) of converting (*verkehren*) the individual referent into a universal, that is, into something completely different—a *creatio ex alterio*, if not *ex nihilo*:

It is as a universal that we express the sensible; what we say is “this,” that is, the universal this; or “it is,” being as such. We do not [consciously] represent the

universal this or being as such, but we express the universal; we do not say at all what we mean in this sense-certainty. But language is the truer; [for] in it we immediately refute our subjective meaning [*Meinung*]. (3:85/60)

Language forces us to create universals, and this is one side of its “idealizing” activity. This linguistic forcing is what gives universals reality in the human world, so that, in Kenneth Westphal’s (1989, 144) words, concepts for Hegel are not merely “some subjective conception by means of which we constitute the world.” Indeed, being linguistic, concepts are the means by which the world constitutes *us*, for language also idealizes us. It is the medium in which is created the “achieved community of consciousnesses” which is humanity itself (3:65/42): “Speech enables man to apprehend things as universal, to attain to the consciousness of his own universality, to express himself as ‘I’” (*Enz.* § 396 *Zus.*).

Language thus not only forces us to idealize the many passing plays of sensation into universal thoughts but also in so doing transforms us, the individuals who perceive those plays, into a community of minds. In this way language exemplifies the cunning of reason, in which speaking individuals forsake their own individuality and become through their utterances something quite different—human beings. It takes the individual and “precisely when it imagines that it is pursuing its own self-maintenance and particular interest, in fact [it] is the reverse of this [*Verkehrte*], an acting which dissolves itself and makes itself into a moment of the whole” (3:53–54/33).

Language thus idealizes reality, by making it universal, and idealizes us, by allowing us to become a human community. In both cases, it operates through an encounter with raw externality. The sensory experiences with which it begins are not created by the mind but given to it; for things of nature are not, as we saw from *Enz.* § 46 *Zus.*, presentations. Thus, “the inner in speech and action makes itself into something other, surrenders itself to the element of transformation, which converts [*verkehrt*] the spoken word and the completed deed and makes out of them something other than what they are in and for themselves as actions of this particular individual” (3:235/187).

The utterance of a sentence to someone else is also an encounter with otherness: “Language and labor are expressions in which the individual no longer keeps and possesses herself in herself, but allows the inner to come entirely out of itself and surrenders it to an Other” (*ibid.*). No one, then, speaks a private language. My words, when spoken to others, do not mean what I want them to mean; their meaning is what those others take them to mean, and that—being

common to the minds of all the hearers—is also a universal. This, of course, is why Fries is wrong—and why what fights him has to be called “idealism.”

To put this double idealization more intuitively: the individual things we experience exhibit manifold distinctions, similarities, and relationships. Some of these—a tiny fraction—become semantic, that is, are given names and thus made universal. Which these are depends, as linguistic, upon the needs and capacities of the community whose language it is; as Hegel puts it, different languages express different representations and have different sets of universals for their meanings (*Enz.* §§ 559, 563)—hence the several words for “snow” in Inuit or for kinship relations in many languages; hence the untranslatability of ancient Greek color terms.<sup>28</sup>

From a linguistic perspective, to have *wahrhaft* existence thus means to have significance to a community; for only things which have such significance will find their way to semantic significance, and only in virtue of such significance can we talk to one another and become a community.<sup>29</sup> The universals produced by our minds are thus the “true” essences of things, not in that they are responsible for the existence of those things but *in that they are what matter to us in those things*. Their “subjectivization” in inwardization is thus to be understood as their “linguisticization.”

Here, we come across a third misdefinition of Kant’s—that of “being.” Hegel makes this clear in his discussion of Gorgias. Gorgias—and, Hegel says, Kant—was wrong to say that what is communicated is not what is. When Gorgias says that “that by which we make things known is speech [*logos*], but speech is not substances and beings and so it is not the things we reveal but speech,”<sup>30</sup> he separates beings from what is spoken and known. From this it follows, as with Kant, that what is spoken and known—is not; being for Kant, as we saw at the outset, belongs to appearances. This dilemma cannot be escaped, Hegel says, as long as we equate being with what is real (*reell*) to the senses. Rather, “philosophical truth is not merely stated as if there were another truth in sensible consciousness; rather, *being is present as philosophical truth articulates it*” (18:440–441; emphasis added). Being is thus what language, and in the final case philosophical language, tells us it is. The content which is produced and grounded in philosophical thought, through its encounters with otherness, is the *wahrhaft* being of the world—the set of universals generated by the “divine” idealism of language.<sup>31</sup>

Hegel’s attitude to Kant’s redefinition of being is one of qualified acceptance. To be for Hegel is not to appear to a subject, but it is also not to be indepen-

dent of mind altogether. It is, we may say, to have a role in the production of universals which is forced on us by language. This is what Hegel means by “infinitude”: “At the name of the infinite, light goes *on* for the heart and the mind, for in it [the infinite] Spirit is not merely abstractly present to itself, but raises itself to itself, to the light of its thinking, of its universality, of its freedom” (5:150/137–138).<sup>32</sup>

Sensible things do have a role in this self-raising, or inwardizing: they are what gets “converted” into universals. But being immediately converted into your opposite is, one must confess, not much of a role; it is not, so to speak, a speaking role. “The finite only *is* as a transcending of itself” (5:160/145–146),<sup>33</sup> and the truer (*wahrhafter*) role in that process is played by what the process leads to—the universals which capture the enduring characteristics of sensible things. Something sensible has “being” to the extent that it is so captured; what has “true being” is what captures it. Hegel expresses the capture by saying that being is present as what philosophical truth says it is.

This, then, is Hegel’s brief ontological answer to the epistemology of skepticism,<sup>34</sup> or rather part of it: our concepts do not “correspond” or “refer” to our world but transformatively constitute it. The somewhat fuller answer is in fact twofold. Michael Forster (1989, 122) has pointed out that “the basic insight into the nature of skepticism that Hegel exploits is that skepticism assumes a general distinction between objects and concepts of such a kind that any concept could exist in the absence of instances, that is without having or ever having had instances.” Nonphilosophical concepts have sensory instances because they are worked up out of *Empfindung*, and any concept which cannot be traced back to *Empfindung* is, as with Locke (1959, 1:121–143), empty: *nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensu* (Enz. § 8 Anm.). For philosophical concepts, the reverse is true: an “instance” of a philosophical term is not its correlate in the real world but simply the occasion of its use, that is, its definition as expressed or given being in a philosophical name. Since thinking tells us what the things we sense truly are, Hegel can go on in the passage just cited and say *nihil est in sensu quod non fuerit in intellectu*.

The motivation for Hegel’s redefinition of being is to provide language with access to what is; the reason why such access must be possible, and is necessary, is that humans form communities. We are now approaching the divine as “God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge” (3:494/409)—what Emil Fackenheim (1996 *passim*, esp. 148–163) has called “the God within.” The “universal divine idea” is then nothing other

than the overall process of the idealism of language, which has its most problematic predicate—"divine"—in precisely the sense that Hegel uses the term when referring to language in the *Phenomenology*; it "converts" (*verkehrt*) individual sensibles into universals: "Rational cognition is itself the divine Spirit and its content is the essence of God" (19:132).

The language of idealism—the language which permits Hegel to articulate what idealism truly is—is thus the human outcome of the divine idealism of language. If we subtract language from this, as Kant does, then we lose inwardization, the transformation of individuals (both sensible and human) into universals (and communities). With that loss, the universal realm—the subject—empties out, as it does for Kant. Since the emptiness has to be filled in if philosophy is not to become trivial, arbitrary principles are called upon to do so. As their role within philosophy becomes more and more important, the slide to bad idealism and evil philosophy becomes inexorable. Only linguistic idealism can save it—and us.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF WILL

THE SECTION on “Morality” in the *Philosophy of Right* constitutes Hegel’s most extended treatment of Kantian moral philosophy. But even there, “comprehending” Kant in Hegel’s own sense is far more important for him than “criticizing” Kant in ours. As I noted in the Introduction, such comprehension involves freeing Kant’s system of its problems and defects, thus allowing it to be what it “truly” is—a subordinate part of Hegel’s. “Morality” thus contains a portrait not directly of Kant but of Hegel’s Kant: of what Kant looks like after he has been subordinated to Hegel. To understand it well enough that we can make some headway with the criticisms of Kant that it also clearly contains, we cannot begin by asking Kantian questions or making Kantian commitments; rather, we must try to deal with Hegel on clearer versions of his own terms. Such is the task of this chapter. Some of the clarity will come from open use of the definitional reading, and more will come from being selective: while attending in what follows to Hegel’s systematic perspective in the *Philosophy of Right*, I will confine myself to those topics which, in the following chapter, will be seen most directly to engage Kant, whether explicitly or not. These include the book’s opening definition of will and its accounts of the purification of the drives; the genesis of normativity in “Abstract Right”; purpose and intention; the nature of insight; welfare and the good; duty; and conscience. Since Hegel’s most important criticism of Kant lies in the fact that Hegel goes on from morality to the more concrete discussions of ethical life, I will venture into that domain as far as its first moment, marriage.



## DEFINITION AND THE WILL

Presenting Hegel in his own terms precludes, of course, presenting him in mine; but there may not be much of a difference here, for while Hegel rarely mentions the definitionalist reading in his other works, he endorses it for the *Philosophy of Right* at § 2 *Anm.* Good definitions, though always hazardous in positive jurisprudence, are, he says, signs of the coherence and consistency of a system of laws. The Romans, he continues, needed a definition of “human being” which would exclude slaves but could not find it. Their inability to do so signified nothing less than the downfall of ancient civilization itself, in the need for its maxim “Some are free” to become the modern “All are free” (see *PhR* §§ 355–358).

Definitions being necessary, there are three ways to produce them. One is through reflection, “the formal universality and unity of self-consciousness.” Reflection proceeds by abstracting from particular cases, attempting to capture the more or less vague representations people have of a class of things; “the correctness of the definition is then made to depend on its agreement with prevailing representations” (§ 2 *Anm.*).<sup>1</sup>

A second approach is to dispense with the hard labor of reflection and simply stipulate definitions which are claimed to capture the “facts of consciousness”—an intuitive approach which Hegel will later (§ 15 *Anm.*) call the “complete insipidization” [*Verseichtigung*] of Kantian philosophy. The reference to “facts of consciousness” establishes this as the philosophy to be found in Hegel’s nemeses Bouterwerk, Fries (who is mentioned here), and Krug, to the last of whom are devoted (as noted in the previous chapter) some splenetic passages of the *Philosophy of Right*’s preface.

The third approach, the “scientific” or philosophical one, is to show the “necessity” of a concept, or its inner identity with other concepts,<sup>2</sup> by producing it out of them. The step-by-step procedure in which a concept comes to be defined constitutes its “proof and deduction”; and having produced it, Hegel tells us, we then look around for what corresponds to it in our representations and language. The validity of the definition itself (as we saw in Chapter 1) thus does not rest on such correspondence, and this distinguishes Hegelian “verified definitions” from the other two kinds.

Hegel not only endorses this definitional procedure here but does not seem to see any philosophical alternative to it; he identifies it in *PhR* § 2 with “scientific procedure in philosophy” itself and says that it provides “what is alone essential to science.” Given this (and my arguments in Chapter 1), Hegel’s thought is first and foremost definitional and so linguistic. It is thus unsurprising that what does not change in all his mature thought is what may be called the “gen-

eral schema" of utterance: (a) something subjective is formulated in thought, or (in Hegel's parlance) as "notion"; it is then (b) expressed objectively, that is, in some sort of material reality opposed to subjectivity; and if that expression runs into problems, (c) the thought is revised so as to accommodate them. This is the basic structure of consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as the book's introduction makes clear, and it is also the structure of the Idea, the culmination of Hegelian logic. As Hegel says in his discussion of this at *Enz.* § 215, "the Idea is essentially a process . . . in which the notion . . . gives itself the character [*sich bestimmt*] of objectivity and of the antithesis thereto [i.e. of subjectivity]; and this externality . . . finds its way back to subjectivity through its immanent dialectic."

For Hegel freedom, like many other terms, will be defined in terms of this general schema. A being is free if it (a) can formulate its own plans and goals, (b) subject them to reality, and (c) reformulate or affirm them, as the case requires.

Not only does the will itself, in moral action, follow this pattern; Hegel's overall account of it does so as well. Will is first presented in the *Philosophy of Right* in its simplest or "natural" form, as it emerges from other faculties of the mind (*PhR* § 11). The idea of freedom implicit in this is spelled out in the book's first section, "Abstract Right." The will is then confronted with external reality, which it seeks to change for the better while still remaining abstract itself; this is the section called "Morality," which contains Hegel's most important criticisms of Kant. Finally, the idea of freedom is reformulated in more concrete terms which can show it not merely as subjective and abstract but as something that already exists in concrete form. In the course of this, more complex definitions of freedom succeed one another, all derived from the different ways in which will intersects with various phenomena of nature and society. These include the will of the abstract person, or abstract right; the will of the moral subject; and finally, the will of the ethical community.

On a definitionalist reading of Hegel, none of these forms of will is necessarily problematic in itself or needs to be, somehow, "overcome," though some certainly exhibit problems (e.g., a criminal or hypocritical will). On the other hand, none of them can fully capture how the German language uses the word *Wille*—to say nothing of how it *should* use it.

## NATURAL WILL AND INTELLIGENCE

Though there are many different kinds and levels of will for Hegel, the term develops out of other concepts and has a single basic, "verified definition" (*Enz.*

§ 99 *Zus.*).<sup>3</sup> That definition was given in the *Logic*,<sup>4</sup> but as Hegel sums it up at *PhR* § 4 *Anm.*, will is a modification of the intelligence:

*Spirit* is initially *intelligence* and . . . the determinations through which it proceeds in its development, from *feeling* to *representation* to *thinking*, are the way by which it produces itself as *will* which, being practical reason as such, is the proximate truth of intelligence.<sup>5</sup>

Intelligence here (as at *Enz.* § 445, which is a more extended discussion) is the power of abstraction (*PhR* § 5). Abstraction, the process of arriving at ever-emptier and more general empirical concepts, is in turn a natural form of inwardization, for which physiological explanations are readily available; Aristotle's account of how repeated impressions (*typoi*) of sensory things leave imprints in the soul, which I discussed in Chapter 3, is an example. Closer to home is Hegel's own account of habit formation (McCumber 1990). Skin which is repeatedly exposed to cold thickens, and this "habit" of the skin is a general way of responding to just one characteristic of the ambient air. Responding repeatedly to an isolated aspect of the overall environment means separating that aspect from others and so is a case of corporeal abstraction, in which the natural soul "posits" itself as a universal (*Enz.* § 409) and thereby inwardizes itself. Because it enables the natural soul thus to inwardize itself, habit formation is emancipatory for Hegel: an account of it is part of a naturalistic account of freedom.

Hegel's actual account of freedom is prudently uncommitted to the details of these physiological accounts of abstraction; habit formation is not concept formation, and Aristotle's psychology was outdated even in Hegel's day.<sup>6</sup> Today's preferred explanation of the power of abstraction would be neurological in nature. The point, however, is that naturalistic explanations have long been abundant. Even if we, like Hegel, do not know how to choose among them, there is no need, and for parsimony's sake no warrant, to view abstraction as the activity of some non-natural intellectual being. Intelligence for Hegel is a natural capacity of living things.

As Hegel views it, the activity of abstraction does not just peter out; it ends when it reaches a single definite, but empty, concept. Since that concept is empty, it is simply the empty form of conceptuality itself; and since concepts, like everything mental for Hegel, are activities, to think about a concept is to think about its production by the mind. The production of a specific thought is what Hegel calls determination (*Bestimmen*; *PhR* § 6); when what is thus determined is regarded as merely a content of the mind itself, as opposed to being attributed

to something existing in external reality, Hegel calls the activity of producing it *self-determination* (*Selbstbestimmung*; *PhR* § 7). In the case of the moral will, abstraction as self-determination has gone all the way to perfect emptiness: the definite content of the mind that it produces is just the perfectly empty concept of the production of concepts, or of self-determining thought itself.<sup>7</sup>

Abstraction is not merely a psychological power of the individual mind for Hegel. It is historical, for the concept of perfect mental emptiness took thousands of years to achieve. As Hegel puts it in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, what for us today are “simple determinations of thought” are in fact abbreviations of long historical processes during which the human spirit has, slowly and laboriously, produced them (3:31–34/16–18). It is a long way from Thales’ conception of the absolute substance as water to Kant’s conception of it as time (*CPR* B, 224–232) and—as we will see—a long way from such ancient duties as “Know thyself” to the perfect abstraction of the Kantian moral law.

Though the millennia-long historical process of abstraction culminates in the single conception of thought itself as perfectly empty, there are many other thought determinations (concepts in something like the ordinary sense) that the intelligence has also produced on its pathway to that conception; and if the mind can determine itself to think pure thought, it can also “determine itself to,” that is, produce, any of those others.<sup>8</sup> When it does so, it determines, or limits itself to, one particular thought; but at the same time it sees this limit as conditioned by its own pure activity of thinking.<sup>9</sup> This means that the intelligence is not bound to what limits it: the limitation is only temporary, because the intelligence is aware of its power to think other things, indeed *any* other things. As Dudley (2002, 32) puts it, “even when it has determined itself to a particular choice it can again abstract from it,” a possibility which Hegel calls “remaining with itself”:

[The will] is *individuality*, the *self-determination* of the “I,” in that it posits itself as the negative of itself [i.e., as something limiting itself], that is, *determinate* and *limited*, and at the same time remains with itself, that is, in its *identity with itself* and universality. . . . This is the *freedom* of the will. (*PhR* § 7)<sup>10</sup>

Merely to think something specific, since you could have thought some other thought, is already, in a sense, an act of free will. Hence, Hegel rejects from the start Kant’s separation of theoretical and practical reason (see *Enz.* § 445 *Anm.*); as Josef Maier (1966, 69) has put it, for Hegel “it is possible only to think ‘willingly’ and to will ‘thinkingly.’”<sup>11</sup>

Which determination my will produces at a given moment is not determined by the will itself, which is perfectly empty, and in that sense the will is here presented as “free.” Hegel is silent on whether other causes may in turn determine the will, and so his view is compatible with both freedom of the will and psychological determinism, though it does not hold that they are compatible with each other.<sup>12</sup> The will is thus able to choose among its various desires and so on—but the choice is not itself said to be undetermined. In any case the will here, in its simplest state, is not free to choose what those desires are, for they are natural and so given to it (*PhR* § 11).<sup>13</sup> The production of a given thought on a given occasion may thus be entirely necessitated by circumstances or desires; but it is not necessitated by the will itself, which would be free even if its thoughts are not. Hence, Hegel’s “solution” to Kant’s third antinomy will be the same as his solution to the first: just as the world may from the point of view of philosophy equally well be regarded as limited or unlimited (*Enz.* § 48 *Zus.*), so the will can be regarded as either free or determined, in Kant’s sense of freedom as uncaused causality.<sup>14</sup>

The other side of the will is its “finitude,” or its dependence on what is not itself. When I think something specific, I become something specific; I “step into determinate being [*Dasein*] in general” (*PhR* § 6). This means that I am surrounded by, and so dependent on, what is not me. The not-me is (and will remain) present as a wholly indeterminate, and so largely incomprehensible, set of objects and circumstances—what Sartre calls the “situation” (see Sartre 1943, 568). The situation of an action, as Pippin observes, is in the first instance its temporal context, for the prevailing circumstances of an action have been established in the past. The situation also has a futural dimension, as we will see, in that these circumstances in turn govern the effects of the action (Pippin 2008, 151–152).

When the will thinks something determinate, then, it produces a contrast between what is and what is not itself. It thereby invokes the distinction between subject and object. This distinction itself, of course, is itself an abstraction, and so is something produced by the intelligence. It is therefore only another temporary limitation, from which intelligence can withdraw. The intelligence, in its very push to abstraction, thus has a “drive” to overcome the distinction between subject and object: to posit a determination which it produces within itself in nature as well (*PhR* §§ 8, 11; see also § 109). Thinking, the intelligence’s immanent activity of self-determination, therefore becomes will when it leads beyond itself to the activity of changing nature in some specific way (*Tätigkeit*; *PhR* § 8). This is the specific modification of intelligence that

makes it into will (see *Enz.* § 468): “the will is a particular way of thinking—thinking translating itself into existence, thinking as a drive [*Trieb*] to give itself existence” (*PhR* § 4 *Zus.*).

When the will undoes the distinction between subjective and objective by acting on the external world, something stays the same throughout that activity: the produced inner content which is supposed to be effectuated externally in nature as well. This constitutes the subjective “goal” (*Zweck*) of the activity (*PhR* § 8). It is its goal, then, which gives unity to a specific stretch of activity and converts it into an action (*Handlung*). An action without a goal is for Hegel, as the 1819–1820 lectures tell us, a “deed” (*Tat*), which he had in turn defined the previous year as simply “a change in an objective existence” (*RPh1817/19*, 93–94; *RPh1819/20*, 77). To make the distinction clear in the later set of lectures, Hegel adduces Oedipus. Oedipus’ “deed” was the killing of his father, but that cannot be attributed to him as his “action” because it was not his intention to do that. This distinction, Hegel continues, is a modern one: we today do not hold Oedipus guilty for killing his father, but the Greeks did. That a person can be held responsible for something that cannot be morally attributed to him constitutes the tragic dimension of ancient Greece.

Intelligence, the capacity of the mind to produce abstract thought determinations within itself, thus becomes will only when it undertakes to realize such a thought determination in external reality. Willing thus requires acting on the external world; no moral theory, if it is or includes a theory of the will, can dispense with a theory of action.<sup>15</sup>

We can get clearer on this through a contrast with Kant. What distinguishes an action from mere activity, or “deeds,” is that an action has a goal (*Zweck*).<sup>16</sup> This will mean that the concrete will, in choosing to perform an action, must evaluate (as Peter Steinberger [1985, 150] puts it) not merely the “form” of the action in a broadly Kantian sense—the motives that led to it—but its content, as given in its goal.<sup>17</sup> Hegel therefore thinks that to act from the moral law requires having a certain sort of goal, and R. Z. Friedman is right to say that this stance means that Hegel (like Barbara Herman) interprets Kant’s position “as essentially a teleological position disguised as a deontological one.”<sup>18</sup> Hegel thereby forces Kant, Friedman notes, into categories which are not Kant’s own (and in fact are broadly, as here, Aristotelian). For Kant, on many standard interpretations, it is irrelevant to the moral status of an act that it conduce to any goal whatsoever, even that of universal freedom; that the categorical imperative is “categorical” means that, no matter what your current purpose, you must adhere to the moral

law in trying to realize it. In Hegel's view, however, this introduction of teleology simply saves Kant from himself. For true moral theory requires an account of moral action; such actions need to be differentiated from mere deeds, and to make this differentiation on a Kantian basis—which Kant never does—we must invoke the moral law, which is for Kant the “determining ground” of the moral will. Since what distinguishes actions from deeds—for Hegel—is that actions have goals, the moral law must play this role as the goal of the act.

In this first abstract formulation of the nature of Hegelian will, it is the activity of realizing a specific goal posited by the intelligence through its pure abstraction, and so just one of many possible goals. There is, at this point, no reason to choose one goal over others, and freedom here is nothing more than arbitrariness (*PhR* § 15). We are obviously a long way from the developed account of morality in the *Philosophy of Right*; in particular, as Kervegan (1996, 49) has pointed out, the account of morality will presuppose what intervenes between this account and itself, namely the section on “Abstract Right.”

## DRIVES AND THEIR PURIFICATION

The immediate phenomenon which calls forth further developments, however, is the drives (*Triebe*). These furnish the “content” of the still-abstract will—the alternatives among which it must choose (*PhR* § 11). What impels the development is their confused and conflictual nature.

Drives are confused and conflictual for Hegel because they, like the intelligence, are first of all natural phenomena—animal appetites. They have, systematically speaking, been around for a while—at least since the *Philosophy of Nature*, where *Enz.* §§ 359–360 defines them as the biological activity of overcoming a lack.<sup>19</sup> As such, a drive is a movement from a “negative” state toward a “positive” one. That positive state, which persists throughout the duration of the drive first as desired and then as achieved, is the drive's goal. There is thus no drive without a goal and no goal without a drive to achieve it; indeed, in Hegel's logical treatment of teleology, a goal *contains* the activity of realizing it and so contains its drive (*Enz.* § 204). Goals, like drives, may be conscious or unconscious; an unconscious goal, which is the only kind animals have, is an instinct (*Enz.* § 360 *Anm.*).

This tells us something else about drives: that they do not exist only as passing urges and behaviors. Rather, a drive can, while remaining natural, be the relatively stable tendency to behave in broadly similar ways on multiple occa-

sions, as when I have a drive to seek liquid when I am thirsty (*PhR* § 12; *Enz.* § 474 *Anm.*). When drives maintain stability across different situations, they become “universal” in the same sense as habits do. In humans, drives may be occasioned not directly by objects but by representations of them, as when I hunger for something specific but not currently present, such as the bowl of Granny’s chicken soup I can almost taste.

That Hegel discusses the drives and their purification at some length in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* (§§ 11–21) should not be taken to mean that they are merely preliminary to morality and ethical life. Rather, as we will now see, the discussion comes here because the purification of the drives, like the will itself, will be central to Hegel’s ethical thought all along.

The drives themselves are important, first of all, because as the concrete side of the will in the *Philosophy of Right*, they supply its dynamism and its content (“only reflection stands above them”; *PhR* § 17 *Zus.*). Since the will has no content of its own at this stage, drives are at first, as we saw, supplied by nature. They thus exhibit the chaos and confusion of nature, from which the intelligence starts (*PhR* §§ 12, 16–18; *Enz.* § 360).<sup>20</sup> Indeed, they are not only chaotic but, as noted above, conflictual (*RPh* 1819/20, 116), for no living thing can act on all its drives and certainly cannot act on them all at once. The drives, therefore, need to be harmonized and “purified” (*PhR* § 19). This purification, whose importance for Hegel’s ethical thought can hardly be overstated, has two aspects: (1) freeing the drives from the form of immediate natural determinacy with which they are at first present; and (2) freeing them from the subjectivity and contingency of their content, by seeing what is “substantial” in them. This is achieved, as Terry Pinkard (1988, 115–116) and Kevin Thompson (2001, 51–52) have noted, by bringing the drives into a rational order, or as Hegel puts it, by “representing them, estimating them, and comparing them with one another and then with the means they employ, their consequences, etc.” (*PhR* § 20).<sup>21</sup>

In the words of Robert Williams (1997, 146), “for Hegel, to overcome the natural drives and inclinations is to take possession of oneself.”<sup>22</sup> As such, the purification of the drives is a moral version of what, in Chapter 3, I called “inwardization.” It is not a matter of eliminating the drives altogether, as Plato sought to do, or merely of eliminating them from determining my decisions, as Kant thought of doing, but of rationalizing and training them, as Aristotle maintained. When that happens, the drives are no longer a chaotic and conflictual mess of impulses but constitute “the rational system of determinations of the will” (*PhR* § 19). If the drives start out as mere animalistic impulses to-



ward actions, then, they do not remain as such. Indeed, in the various transformations that will befall them as the dialectic moves on, they constitute the content of will throughout the entire *Philosophy of Right*. It is not too much to say that “the rational system of determinations of the will” in which they culminate is ethical life itself (see *PhR* § 144).

We can already see this by noting that one thing drives become, according to the *Lectures* of 1819/20, is virtues. A virtue is a good drive, a stable, natural inclination to do the right thing when circumstances call for it; the habit of eating healthy foods is thus a virtue. Insofar as they themselves are natural, virtues are specific to individuals and cannot be enjoined; we cannot be commanded to be as brave as Alexander or Caesar. When virtues are specified and enjoined on humans in general, without regard to the differing individual characteristics exhibited by those humans, they become duties (*RPh* 1819/20, 102–103). A duty for Hegel is thus a rationalized drive (*PhR* § 19 *Anm.*), and “the [philosophical] treatment of the drives, inclinations, and passions with respect to their true import [*Gehalt*] is therefore essentially the doctrine of the juridical, moral, and ethical duties” (*Enz.* § 474 *Anm.*).

The first thing to note about the purification of the drives, then, is that it is not a stage which is left behind when the *Philosophy of Right* moves on to other matters. Allen Wood (1990, 30–32) has referred to Hegel’s overall ethics as one of “self-actualization,” in which moral and ethical principles have appeal and force because they are the kinds of behavior engaged in by a certain kind of self. The production, or actualization, of that kind of self is as we will see a manifold process with many levels; but part of it is the ongoing organizing of the moral agent’s drives. Since those drives are part of her, this is a form of self-organization, and the moral agent thus has for Hegel the ontological status of a self-organizing being.

The theme of the self-organization of the moral agent is not only ongoing in but central to Hegel’s ethical thought. Indeed, if the set of rational determinations of the will in which it results will be ethical life itself, and if the whole point of morality is to pass over into ethical life, then the whole point of morality lies in the self-organization of the moral agent, which is then not merely *a* central concern of Hegel’s ethical thought but *the* central concern. In particular, as we will see, the Kantian moral law will be understood—and revered—by Hegel because of the role that it plays in later versions of the purification of the drives.

The current point of rationalizing, or purifying, the drives is to reduce their mutual conflict and thereby produce happiness (*Glückseligkeit*; *PhR* § 20); later

organizing principles will be welfare and, finally, the good. For such conflict reduction, in the Western philosophical tradition anyway, you need a single authority; thus, Aristotle ends his theological discussion in *Metaphysics* 11 by quoting Homer: “The rule of many is not good; one ruler let there be.”<sup>23</sup> Within the Hegelian will we have not a king or a god but a ruling principle; and this is the “absolute drive” to set into nature not merely this or that determinate content but freedom itself—that is, to find a place in nature for the will which has itself for an object. As Hegel puts it in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*:

The will is free only when it does not will anything other, external, or foreign (for then it would be dependent), but wills itself—when it wills the will. Absolute will is this: willing to be free. Self-willing will is the ground of all right and obligation [*Verpflichtung*]-and so of all statutory determinations of right [*Rechtsgesetze*], commands of duty, and enjoined obligations. (12:524)<sup>24</sup>

For the will to will anything it must will itself, for it cannot adopt a determinate goal without bringing to bear its own abstract side as well. My power to adopt a specific goal is my power to have adopted other goals, and my choice of this goal over others affirms my general capacity to choose.

The status of such a will in nature will not be that of a natural phenomenon but of a force of nature: something natural that manifests itself indirectly by organizing natural phenomena—namely, the drives. In order to serve as an organizing principle for the drives, the nature of the will needs to be given a formulation independent of those drives; and since the drives are natural, this means the will itself must be viewed as independent of nature.<sup>25</sup> That is the status that Kant gave to it. On the “improved” version of Kantianism which constitutes the “moral” standpoint for Hegel, the will is in fact natural but is seen as something which is independent of nature because it strives to control nature.

The idea that self-organization is basic to ethics has a couple of important historical antecedents in addition to Homer, and they are not strictly ethical but ontological in character. One is Aristotle’s concept of *physis* as immanent form, shaping a being from inside. It is also hard not to see here the structures of “internal teleology” that Kant discusses in the *Critique of Judgment* (AA, 5:369–381). Hegel refers us to both these forerunners with a revealing remark in the *Philosophy of Nature* on his view of the entire history of philosophy:

The basic determination of the living being grasped by *Aristotle*, that it must be conceived as operating according to its goal, was almost lost to modern thought

until Kant reawakened it, in his own way, as the *internal* purposiveness, [the view that] the living thing is to be regarded as its own end [*Selbstzweck*]. (Enz. § 360 *Anm.*)

After Aristotle, any conception of the fundamental nature of the living thing, and in particular of the moral being, was lost until Kant recovered it—and not any Kant, but the later Kant of the *Critique of Judgment*. This shows one of Hegel's main strategies in forcing Kant into Aristotelian categories: he systematically downplays the first two *Critiques* in favor of the third, which he then reads as a recovery of Aristotle. Thus, it is with the purification of the drives that Hegel actually begins doing what Jean-François Kervegan (1996, 38) thinks he did not do and wishes he had—namely, construct moral theory on the basis of the third, rather than the second, *Critique*.

In spite of its importance to Hegel, there is little discussion of the purification of the drives in the secondary literature; even Wood, for all his emphasis on self-actualization in Hegel, does not relate it to the purification of the drives. We can now see a couple of reasons for this. One has to do with Hegel's use of the term *Trieb*. In the central discussion at *PhR* §§ 11–21, drives and their purification are clearly stated to be central to morality, the “science of right,” and to education; they are said to constitute the “principle of right, of morality, and of all ethics” (*PhR* §§ 19, 20, 21). In other writings, Hegel carefully differentiates drives from needs, desires, and passions (Enz. §§ 360, 473 *Anm.*), though he usually takes them to be equivalent to inclinations (the Kantian *Neigungen*). But in the rest of the *Philosophy of Right*'s section on “Morality,” drives are merely one component of various lists he gives of such impulses and are not always present even in those lists (see *PhR* §§ 37, 45, 49, 123, 139 *Anm.*). The reason for this is clear: even stable drives, such as thirst, occur in random, particular, and contingent ways about which there is little, philosophically, to be said. The systematic development, though impelled by the drives and their conflicts, is to be found in the other side of the will, that of its increasingly complex universality.

Moreover, as Wood (1990, 70–71) notes, the purification of the drives is introduced in its central discussion as aiming at happiness, which may seem to give it only a subsidiary role in Hegelian ethical thought. But, Hegel tells us, it is only for “reflective” consciousness, or morality, that this is the case (*PhR* § 20).

Happiness is later identified with the “abstract” idea of freedom itself (*PhR* § 123), and it is freedom—the central concept of the *Philosophy of Right*—at which the purification of the drives ultimately aims.

## ABSTRACT RIGHT, PERSONHOOD, AND THE GENESIS OF NORMATIVITY

The will's first series of efforts at the objective realization of its content constitutes "abstract right."<sup>26</sup> Abstract right correctly sees freedom as the "existence of a free will," but in doing this it abstracts from all differences among human beings (*PhR* § 37). It therefore sees freedom as a universally human property—as the presence of free will, in this abstract sense, in an "immediate external thing": in my body and property (*PhR* § 33). Basically, the abstract agent, or legal "person," selects a portion of external nature which, as immediate, just happens to be around, and asserts its right to control that portion. In other words, the will is first actual in the ownership of property (including the body; see Williams 1997, 140–144).

Any animal, to be sure, has some degree of control over its own body (see *Enz.* § 351), but that is not a matter of right, for such control has no norms; as Aristotle remarks, the rule of soul over body is "despotic" (*Politics* 1254b3). What gives rise to norms is what makes humans special: that their movements may be governed not merely by animal feeling (*Enz.* § 351) but by will, which as we saw means by intelligence or thought. The double nature of will as at once abstract and determinate means that it can be simply, or "immediately," identified as both at once. When the determinate side of the will is recognized but not specified, that is, is left as merely an "initial indeterminacy which is itself a determinacy," we have the idea of an empty yet internally universal being which expresses itself in something determinate—a "person" (*PhR* § 34 and *Zus.*). In accordance with the basic structure of will which we saw previously, however, the power of producing this thought could have produced other thoughts as well: any single person is therefore one of an indeterminate number of other persons. Since there is no content to distinguish these different persons from one another, all are alike; this person could have been any person.

Thus, an action performed by some individual person could have been performed by any of an indefinite number of other persons; and if that action was something which I, as a person, think was the right thing to do, it may have a claim on other people: since they are like the person who performed the action, *if* they are in similar circumstances they should perform it too. The action thus becomes, conditionally, a candidate for normative status. More generally, "personality contains . . . the capacity for right [*Rechtsfähigkeit*] and the basis, itself abstract, of abstract and hence formal right. The commandment of right is therefore: Be a person and respect others as persons" (*PhR* § 36).

Hegel's wording, as so often, is more careful than it may appear. To say that personality "contains" the capacity for right, or for norms, means that it does not yet have it; the capacity for norms is implicit in personhood the same way that the terms of a word's definition are there when we use the word (see the remarks on "immediacy" at *PhR* § 34 *Zus.*). This is why personhood is not itself abstract right but only its "basis": it is what makes normative claims possible. The normative claim of abstract right, again, is wholly abstract: "Be a person and respect others as persons."

Insofar as humans have a will at all—insofar, then, as they are persons—they thus have the drive to obtain property and are in this all alike (*PhR* §§ 35, 49 *Anm.*). That all persons alike seek to obtain property is, to be sure, not a norm but a fact. Norms are needed because there are a finite number of objects of which we can take possession, which means that my drive to property can conflict with that of others and I can take their property, thus injuring their personhood. We thus have a situation in which, instead of the different drives of a single moral agent conflicting with one another, a drive of one moral agent conflicts with a drive of another agent.<sup>27</sup>

It is thus, once again, the mutually conflictual nature of drives which leads to the next stage. When I do injury to another, she can retaliate by injuring me in turn; this constitutes revenge. Revenge is an inconsistent form of behavior, because it is supposed to rectify an injury but itself consists in injury (*PhR* § 102). It thus becomes a case of what Hegel calls (though not here) the "bad infinite," as each new injury leads to further injury.<sup>28</sup> What is needed is a principle recognized both by me and the other party, indeed by all other parties, as a norm to which we all must conform and which is therefore universal—a law (*PhR* § 103). Such a principle is already inherent in the will through what we have seen to be its very structure (*PhR* § 104); it is the abstract universal side of will, or what is now called the will "existing in itself" (*der an sich seiende wille*; e.g., at *PhR* §§ 104, 105, 106 and *Anm.*, 108, 111, etc.; see also Dudley 2002, 40).

When the idea that all humans possess identical wills becomes a governing principle for concrete behavior, we get norms—and eventually, morality. A principle becomes "governing" when government is involved—when there is a neutral authority to which I can appeal. At this stage, that authority is present not as an actual government but merely as a specific realization of the idea of the freedom which I and others have: as the ad hoc "community" of persons which is created by a contract and as such is recognized by all persons.

Morality, to which we now turn, thus originates in the dialectic of revenge and consists in the individual will, or the will for itself, coming into accord with the universal will,<sup>29</sup> or the will in itself (*PhR* § 106 *Anm.*).<sup>30</sup> This accordance has two sides. As immanent to the will, it is intellectual and consists in knowing what the universal will wills, that is, knowing the governing norms of the moment. But according to the will's inherent structure, we also have its finite side—the will which adopts this or that determinacy as its goal and tries to realize it.<sup>31</sup> Since the goal consists in making a part of nature conform to the content of the will, will has in this to cope with nature. This coping is moral action (*Handlung*).

Though, as Wood (1989, 464–465) notes, Hegel did not begin to develop his theory of action until the *Philosophy of Right*, an account of moral action is no more a mere ancilla to moral theory for him than the purification of the drives is introductory (see Quante 2004, xiii). It follows from the very nature of the individual moral subject, as we have already seen, that it must act: that it must try to change nature in some way, if only by taking possession of part of it. As Wood (1990, 143) puts it, “mere strivings or intendings, in abstraction from the actions that produce them, are too inchoate and ambiguous to be objects of moral assessment.”<sup>32</sup>

Nature here (*PhR* §§ 115–119) is morally relevant as what I earlier called the “situation”—an indeterminate set of objects and circumstances, including other persons,<sup>33</sup> which the will finds before it, as opposed to the content which it posits through its own self-determination and so knows completely. Not only are the natural circumstances of an action indeterminate but the action itself fades off into its effects, which cannot be easily separated from the action itself. (When a student raises his hand in class, is he stretching or seeking to be called on? The answer depends to an extent on what the teacher does.) My representation of the circumstances in which I act may or may not be wrong; but it is always incomplete, because I cannot know all the effects of my action. While I am responsible for my actions, then, I never understand them completely. I am therefore held morally responsible only for:

- a. those aspects of my action and its consequences which were explicitly present in my original purpose (*PhR* § 117); plus
- b. whatever consequences are so closely connected with my action as to be inseparable from it in thought (*PhR* § 118), including consequences which I foresee but do not desire, and consequences which I should foresee but do not.<sup>34</sup>

As we will see, it is my inability fully to understand my own actions that will lead to the role of the community in ethical life: I need a community to tell me not only whether my action was justified but what it was in the first place.

## PURPOSE AND INTENTION

My purpose, or *Vorsatz*, is the goal I formulate to myself in light of the external circumstances of which I take account, or in Hegel's term, "presuppose" (*Voraussetzen*).<sup>35</sup> My goal, thus, may be to satisfy my hunger, while my purpose is to get the apple which I know is in the kitchen and eat it. As itself a goal, a purpose includes the drive to realize it, and a purpose is thus the specification and adoption of a drive. A drive has to be adopted in order to become a purpose because I may, for example, have drives both to eat and to drink; I may be hungry and thirsty at the same time (and also sleepy, ambitious, etc.). When I decide to make one (or more) of these the aim of my subsequent conduct, I resolve that conflict and turn that drive into a purpose.

My purpose thus makes an action "mine," morally ascribable to me (see Quante 2004, 100). But it does not make it moral, for purposes as such are not normative: "Get an apple from the kitchen" is not a moral injunction.<sup>36</sup> When the claim that others should behave as I do is introduced, it can only come from the universal level of the will—that is, in terms of its freedom or its abstract power to will anything whatever, in virtue of which (as we saw) it applies to all persons. When my purpose is formulated so as to have such a normative claim, it is something which I have more or less reflectively adopted or willed (*RPh*1817/19, 78) and so is a reflection of who I am. The purpose then becomes what Hegel calls the "intention" (*Absicht*) of my act: that which makes the act valid for me (*PhR* § 114) and so what I am responsible for in having decided to perform it.<sup>37</sup> Thus, I may have as my purpose to place a lighted match next to a piece of wood and as my intention to provide quiet to the neighborhood by burning down my noisy neighbor's house. The intention, as the validating goal of my action, is thus an intellectualized version of a drive: it is a drive which has not merely been formulated and adopted, as a purpose has, but also described in such a way as to claim moral validity of some kind.<sup>38</sup>

The move from purpose to intention, from *Vorsatz* to *Absicht*, is conditioned by the indeterminacy of external circumstances. I may adopt a means, for example, which does not lead to the ultimate goal I seek; what I do may violate social norms I am not thinking about at the moment; and so forth (*PhR* § 117). In order

for an action to be morally imputed to me, I must take these possibilities into account and know enough of the ways of the world to do so. Formulating my intention thus requires me to go beyond my immediate purpose and take account, in particular, of the consequences of pursuing that purpose, mentioned in (b) above. The move is therefore precarious.<sup>39</sup> The general knowledge of the world that it requires is not possessed by everyone, which is why moral actions are not imputed to children or insane people in any simple way (*PhR* § 120 *Anm.*).

Any action that I perform will in general be governed not only by natural circumstances but also by various laws and norms (*PhR* § 132 *Anm.*) to which it must submit. This joint governance by nature and society is what Hegel calls the “right of objectivity.” This can go so far that I may, as a citizen, be forced by society—and in particular by the law—to engage in actions which go against my conscience (*PhR* § 137 *Anm.*).

Since an action is individuated by its goal and so, if moral validity is claimed for it, by its intention, and since the move from purpose to intention is precarious, actions are always ambiguous. Any action can therefore be described in a variety of ways, depending on which intention we assign to it. In an example of Hoy’s, if I take a rich man’s purse, my purpose would be to gain possession of the purse; but my intention could be either to enrich myself or to give the money in it to the poor.<sup>40</sup> My action can thus be either theft or charity. Not even the person who committed the action is privileged in this matter;<sup>41</sup> for it is not up to me what ignorance is culpable; should I have known that the man whose purse I took was really a kind soul who himself was about to distribute the money to the poor?

Since my knowledge of the circumstances and consequences of my action is never complete, what I do is never only and exactly what I intend. As Hegel puts this in the *Phenomenology*:

Speech and work are outer expressions [*Äußerungen*] in which the individual no longer keeps and possesses himself within himself, but lets the inner get completely outside of him, leaving it to the mercy of something other than himself. . . . In speech and action, the inner turns itself into something else, thus putting itself at the mercy of the element of change, which twists the spoken word and the accomplished act into meaning something else than they are in themselves, as actions of this particular individual. (3:235/187)

Merely submitting my action to the judgment of my own moral will cannot tell me which description applies to it, for in contrast to the epistemological



complexities of action, my knowledge of the will in itself is simple—as simple and empty as that will itself. Hence, when it comes to deciding what the universal commands me to do, here and now I cannot give reasons; it is a matter for sheer insight (*Einsicht*; *PhR* § 132).

### THE DILEMMA OF INSIGHT

This presents a dilemma. On the one hand, only my own moral insight has standing to tell me whether a given action is right or wrong. But in order to do so, my insight would have to know what *kind* of action it is (in Hoy's example above, it would have to know whether grabbing the purse is an act of charity or of theft). And my own insight, just because it is insight, cannot decide among the various descriptions which could apply to the action. Thus, "the right to recognize nothing that I do not perceive as rational is the highest right of the subject, but by virtue of its subjective determination it is at the same time *formal*. . . . Because of its formal determination, insight is equally capable of being *true* and of being mere *opinion and error*" (*PhR* § 132 *Anm.*).

This dilemma is a persistent one. Hegel's solution to it will not be given until the transition is made to ethical life, but it is suggested by his comparison (at *PhR* § 137 *Anm.*) of this situation with the way science works. In modern science, the individual has the right to demand that scientific truths be proved (or verified) to her; she does not have to take them on the basis of authority. But it does not follow that any single individual has the right to decide what scientific truth is; that is a matter for the scientific community.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, on the one hand, I have the right to perform any action which my moral insight tells me accords with duty (*PhR* § 123). On the other hand, I do not have the right to decide what moral truth is.

Hence, an individual cannot solve the problem of which intention should be assigned to her action, any more than she can decide for herself whether a scientific theory is acceptable. The very malleability of insight, however, means that it can be instructed, which means in turn that the moral community, that is, ethical life, will be able to decide it. But it cannot do that here, because individual insight is empty; the moral community cannot show me that my action is right or wrong if I have no criterion by which to apply, and so understand, those predicates.

At the current stage of things, if I have the right to perform any action which my insight tells me is morally justified and correspondingly no right to perform an action which my insight cannot recognize as morally justified, then insight

has replaced happiness as the basic organizing principle in the self-organization of the moral agent. It can function properly in this way, however, only when the moral community instructs it as to what the community deems to be the correct description of an action—to recur yet again to Hoy's example, the community as present in the law tells me that taking the rich man's purse is not acceptably construed as an act of charity but is a case of theft. As in the *Phenomenology*, I cannot be sure what I have done until others instruct me what it was.

My right to see for myself whether my action is moral or not is derived, as Ardis Collins (2001, 32) points out, from the individuality of the moral will: "A person motivated by duty must will it as the embodiment of this person's singular, exclusive will."<sup>43</sup> When I act from my moral insight, then, I act as the particular moral subject that I am; my right to do this is my right to find satisfaction (*Befriedigung*) in my action (*PhR* §§ 121–123). Such satisfaction can come directly from the concrete circumstances of my purpose, as when I impulsively give money to a beggar and satisfy a generous drive; or it can come from my reflected intention, for example from an observed reduction in poverty in my city. Such satisfaction is rational when my action is explained to me in ways which justify it, so that I know it was good. Acknowledgment that satisfaction in this final sense is a right is the chief point of contrast between the ancient and modern ages, and that the modern state allows for it is the source of its "prodigious strength" (*PhR* §§ 124 *Anm.*, 260).<sup>44</sup>

## WELFARE AND THE GOOD

Because satisfaction can apply alike to the relatively specific level of purpose and the relatively general level of intention, motives for actions stand on a continuum from specific to general (*PhR* § 121). The general satisfaction of my internal nature, of my needs, inclinations, and so forth, is my happiness or "welfare" (*Wohl*; *PhR* § 123; see also *RPh* 1817/19, 80). Welfare is thus morality's more reflective and universal version of happiness; but the distinction appears to be a slippery one. In the *Lectures* of 1817/19, happiness (*Glückseligkeit*) is defined as the feeling of satisfaction of the drives and welfare as happiness sanctioned by ("subsumed under" [*subsumiert*]) the universal (*RPh* 1817/19, 82). At *PhR* § 123, however, Hegel has trouble distinguishing them; this presumably reflects the fact that, like happiness for Kant,<sup>45</sup> both welfare and happiness are malleable in content. Since happiness (for both Hegel and Kant) and welfare (for Hegel) are defined as the greatest possible sum of satisfactions of needs,

their concrete content is dependent on which I and others happen to need from time to time.<sup>46</sup> I will follow the *Lectures* and call “happiness” the subjective satisfaction of internal nature, while “welfare” will be such satisfaction as is morally sanctioned, that is to say, as the satisfaction of all.

Welfare so understood now provides the principle in virtue of which my drives are purified and my moral agency organizes itself. Insofar as it is sanctioned by the universal, welfare is not merely my own and that of those around me but embraces the welfare of all; my representation of welfare is thus that of a happy human race (*PhR* § 125). When the welfare of all is not merely my subjective representation (e.g., everyone in the world provided with ice cream) but the welfare of everyone insofar as all alike are simply persons, welfare is conceived in terms of abstract right. It is then “the good” (*PhR* § 128).

The good is thus the satisfaction of all people, or their welfare, insofar as they are viewed merely as persons. As such, they are entirely defined by the coexistence, in each of them, of the universality and particularity that the will exhibited at the stage of abstract right; and their satisfaction can only be their ability to function in virtue of that coexistence, that is, as persons. The good is thus “defined” by casting back all the way to abstract right and uniting that conception with that of the general welfare. We thus get the concept of the *rightful* welfare of all—or freedom seen as the realized final goal of the world (*PhR* § 129). The scare quotes above are to underline the fact that Hegel’s “definition” of the good will remain empty—here because concrete differences among human beings have been abstracted from and later (as we will see) because what constitutes the rightful welfare of all will change with place and time.

Because abstract right includes taking possession of my own body, it is, as I have noted, presupposed by all actions whatsoever. The good, then, is the rational goal of all actions and of the moral will as such. In particular, the general welfare is only good if it is combined with right, and the right is not good without the general welfare (*PhR* §§ 130, 131). The good thus takes over from happiness and insight as the organizing principle in the self-constitution of the moral agent. An action is now morally valid if insight, or as Hegel now calls it, the “cognition” (*Kenntnis*) of the individual moral agent, says that it is consonant with, conforms to, and leads to the good (*PhR* § 132), that is, to the ability of persons to function (organize themselves as moral agents and act) in terms of the general welfare. But the individual agent does not conform to the good in any simple way, because as we have seen she is conditioned by nature. Hence the good is distinct from the individual moral consciousness and must

achieve the proper relation (*Verhältnis*; *PhR* § 131) to it.<sup>47</sup> The individual, from her side, must also take up a relation to the good. This relation is duty.

### THE DILEMMA OF DUTY

The good does not coincide with the individual moral will in any simple way, because that will is conditioned by nature. But insofar as the moral agent seeks to do only what is good, the good is her “essence,” that is, her true nature (*PhR* §§ 131, 133). Her recognition that the good is the essence of her will but not her will itself is moral obligation (*Verpflichtung*; *PhR* § 133); and what obligation commands in a specific case is her duty (*Pflicht*).

My duty is thus what I must do here and now in order to conform to the good; but since the good is abstract and empty, so are obligation and duty. Hence, the moral agent cannot know just what her duty is on any given occasion, and the question arises, what is duty? (*PhR* § 134). In general, the answer is clear: a duty is a specific pattern of behavior which expresses and realizes not welfare (which is the principle of insight) but rightful welfare, or the good. But what are my specific duties? What must I do here and now, in these circumstances?

That I must do my duty, but do not know what it is, is a complication of the previous dilemma that I had the right to do what my insight commanded but that it could command anything whatsoever; both are expressions of the disparity between the emptiness of the moral command to act and the multifarious concreteness in which I must act. What differentiates the two dilemmas does not reside in the contrast between right and duty or between welfare and the good as central organizing principles, for these both follow from a deeper difference: that between insight and conscience.

In conscience, the universal will takes up its relation to my individual will (*PhR* § 137). The “call of conscience” is thus the universal will telling my individual will what to do. It is moral insight directed not to welfare but to the good. Since the good is derived from abstract right and so is objective, conscience—unlike insight—has fixed principles and serves as an absolute justification for the individual moral agent. As with insight, such an agent has the right to determine in and out of itself alone just what its duty is on any specific occasion (*PhR* § 137 and *Anm.*).

Conscience, like insight, is thus incorrigible: if my conscience tells me that something is good, the judgment cannot be appealed. But since it is the abstract universal good that conscience expresses, the call of conscience (as in

Heidegger [1967, 273–274, 296]) has no content; it merely tells me to “do the right thing” and is only the “formal side” of the will’s activity. Since it is abstract, it cannot take account of specific circumstances and so its command is categorical: “act so as to further the good of all moral agents,” that is, their freedom. In this abstract yet commanding emptiness, the call of conscience is Hegel’s “teleologized” version of Kantian respect for the moral law.

The overall dilemma, however, has changed in one respect: insight had no criterion for deciding whether an action was good or bad, whereas conscience does. Where insight has no specification at all of what “moral” validity consists in, conscience’s call at least claims to be validated by the fact that the action conduces to the good. To be sure, that criterion, like the Kantian moral law of which it is the reformulation, is too empty to be of much help to the individual moral agent, for it is merely the rightful welfare of all persons. But conscience, unlike insight, at least has in this a principle by which it is supposed to function. Conscience can therefore be “true” or not, depending on whether it does or does not at least appeal to that standard. The dilemma is thus displaced, from one concerning my inability to know whether a proposed course of action is my duty or not to one of whether my conscience is “true” or not. My moral job now is not to examine the course of action itself to see if it fulfills my duty but to examine my conscience to see if it is true or merely some sort of rationalization (*PhR* §§ 111, 137 *Anm.*).<sup>48</sup>

What is crucial here—so crucial that Hegel spends three sections on it—is that conscience has the absolute right to decide what my duty is. Since a duty is a rationalized drive, we can say that conscience has the absolute right to decide whether a given drive is good or not; the activity of conscience is thus another stage of the self-organization of the moral agent. Hegel refers to this right of conscience as the “volatilization” (*Verflüchtigung*, translated as “evaporation”) of all content (*PhR* § 138), because it renders the content of duty wholly dependent on the verdict of conscience. The power of conscience is thus absolute—which means that it can also be exercised independently of the good. It is when this happens that conscience is untrue—and is the ground of evil, in that it enables us to take actions which are not good and declare them to be good (*PhR* § 139). This leads to hypocrisy and casuistry (*PhR* § 140 and *Anm.*)—the final forms which unpurified drives take in morality.<sup>49</sup>

Morality now confronts two questions: “What is duty?” and “Is my conscience genuine?” They must be answered together. My conscience can only be true if what it tells me to do is genuinely good; and if it is, then what it decides is my duty really is my duty.

The solution to this is to establish conscience as operating in terms of the good—in terms of the welfare of all moral persons. When this happens, the “principle of determination” which tells us which concrete actions are good and which are not is no longer able to volatilize any content whatsoever but remains tied to the abstract good itself (*PhR* § 141). Conscience is now directed to bringing about the good,<sup>50</sup> and this establishment is the beginning of ethical life.<sup>51</sup> Its Kantian roots, at least on the “teleologized” reading of Hegel (and, we saw, of Friedman and Herman), are strong: I have a duty to organize myself and act in such a way as to bring about the rightful welfare of all, that is, their capacity to organize themselves and to act in accordance with the good. How can it come about?

### THE EXISTENCE OF CONSCIENCE AND THE OPENNESS OF THE GOOD

What is added to the abstract good, Hegel tells us, to produce ethical life is thus not a whole set of determinations but simply the individual’s formal activity of determining what is good, which is conscience itself (*PhR* § 141; *RPh1817/19*, 90; *RPh1819/20*, 121). In other words, the good is not given a fixed definition but—within the abstract parameters set by the concept of the welfare of all—is seen as open to further determination by the individual conscience. Ethical life thus does not begin by somehow producing<sup>52</sup> concrete content out of the empty moral law—or, as Hegel is now calling this, the abstract good of conscience. Rather, it sees that abstract good as a criterion for deciding what is a duty and what is not. The Kantian moral law, in all its emptiness, is now the central organizing principle in the self-constitution of the moral agent.

The openness of the good, the idea that its content is not fixed but capable of change over time, has been evident in the *Philosophy of Right* since § 28, where Hegel identified the “essential development of the substantial content of the Idea” not as some a priori deduction of content but as the encounter between the moral subject and the objective world, in which the subject “translates” its goals into objectivity and remains with itself in that content. The concrete determinations of duty which ethical life comes to contain are not produced a priori out of the empty principle of the good but by experience—by trial and error.<sup>53</sup> The openness of the good is clear when Hegel criticizes Kant for making the good something static (*unbewegtes*) in its emptiness; and it is this stasis, in turn, which Hegel says makes realizing the good impossible and relegates it to the status of a mere “ought” (*RPh1817/19*, 86).

The relevant trials and errors, however, are carried out by the individual only to a small extent. This is evident in that an individual's action must, as we have seen, take account of prevailing circumstances—not only natural ones but the norms and laws imposed by the state as well (*PhR* § 132), which are already there as objective givens to which my action must submit. These norms and laws are not posited by the state simply as facts but as “powers” to which the individual must conform (*PhR* § 145), and so as duties. They have in fact been produced by many individuals, over the course of the history of the society in which that individual finds herself—that is, through “circumstances, eventualities, needs, and incidents” (*PhR* § 3 *Anm.*), or as I have put it, by trial and error; they are thus “positive.” It is this historically induced “positivity” which, as Kervegan (1996, 41) points out, overcomes the “empty ought” which Hegel locates primarily in Fichtean, but also in Kantian, moral theory.<sup>54</sup>

The content of these duties has been present from the beginning, first in the form of drives; a duty for Hegel is ultimately a drive which has been ratified by the moral community as a particular form of the welfare of all moral agents, and so of the good. The individual subject thus does not “posit” duties tout court but “posits them in herself” (*sie setzt daher Unterschiede in sich*; *PhR* § 144). She finds herself confronted by a world of ethical powers to which she must submit; she posits those powers “in herself” when her conscience tells her why this submission is a good thing.

If it is—for as we will see, Hegel is no moral relativist. Hannah Arendt (Arendt 1958, 12) famously claimed that all philosophy is a reaction to the death of Socrates, and here we see that Hegel is no exception. Socrates, for Hegel, is the extreme case of someone whose conscience tells him not to act according to the laws and customs in force around him. His conscience is genuine: his dialectical practice is indeed an enhancement of the good of all rational (and so free) beings, and we might say that this is the historical moment when such conscience emerges, as opposed to the mere moral insight of people like Euthyphro. Yet the powers that be are the powers in force, and as the *Crito* teaches, Socrates must freely submit to the laws of Athens—by dying.

## THE RESOLUTION OF THE DILEMMA

This appeal to the moral community provides Hegel's solution to the dilemma of conscience. That dilemma itself supplied the crucial complication to the dilemma of insight which makes a solution possible, for the dilemma is resolved

when conscience is true, and it is the moral community which establishes conscience as true. “Establish” here means not only to verify that conscience is true but to make it true in the first place; and to see how it works, we must be clear on what it means for conscience to be untrue.

Let us consider conscience as it is conceived in morality. It operates in what we might call a “methodologically solipsistic” fashion in that it undertakes to decide whether a proposed action is a doing of one’s duty or not, and to make that appeal without regard to the values, laws, and customs—in general, what I will call the social “practices”—of the surrounding community. Since what makes a duty a duty—that acting in conformity with it conduces to the rightful welfare of all—is entirely abstract, conscience cannot in fact make the decision; in trying to do so it is pretending to be something it is not and is therefore hypocritical (*PhR* § 140) and untrue. When conscience takes local practices into account in deciding on an action, it seeks a verdict which has two parts: deciding that the act conforms to a local practice and deciding that this practice itself is a duty, that is, is morally valid.

Conscience is thus established as genuine when it takes as its objects not individual actions but the more general practices of which actions are instances; true conscience issues its moral verdicts for practices, not for actions. The reason for this has been with us since the discussion of intention. To be an instance of a practice is to be describable in its terms, and any action can, we saw, be described in more than one way. Which way is best is up to the community to decide; the individual conscience renders its verdict on its own actions as part of a community.<sup>55</sup>

The lower level of the complex verdict determining whether or not an action comes under a given social practice is to be decided by the community whose practice it is. Such communities are usually structured themselves and so are components of the state. It is up to one’s organized religion, for example, to decide whether the ceremony one went through with one’s beloved is a valid marriage; up to the legislature to certify whether the mass voting of a community constitutes an election; up to the scientific community to decide whether one’s hypothesis is verified or even intelligible (see Hull 1988, 7 and *passim*). Though Hegel’s complaints about public opinion (*PhR* §§ 315–317) can be taken as protests against the issuing of moral verdicts by unauthorized individuals and groups, the moral community at large may also enter into this kind of decision. A case in point would be the issue of whether or not Bill Clinton’s sexual games in the White House were an impeachable offense; the US House of Rep-



representatives decided that they were, but public opinion held strongly that they were not, and the latter eventually carried the day (see Jacobson 2000).

The difference between judging an action in terms of the practice it is held to exemplify and judging an action directly in terms of duty itself refers us to the distinction, in Hegel's *Logic*, between judgment and syllogism (see *Enz.* §§ 179, 181 *Zus.*).<sup>56</sup> When I judge that "S is P," I establish an immediate connection between subject and predicate, in the form of the copula. Because it is immediate, however, the connection is unwarranted. In order to warrant it, I have to appeal to various properties of S which qualify it as an instance of P. These properties are, like P itself, universals; but being more concrete than P, they are more clearly exemplified, or not exemplified, by S. It is the difference between saying "S is a rodent" and saying "S has hair, nipples, and incisors but no canines, which makes it a rodent." Particular social practices mediate between the universal good and individual actions in the same way that the particular properties of a thing mediate between an individual subject and the predicate it exemplifies. Where the decision made by a methodologically solipsistic conscience is merely a "judgment" of whether an action conduces to the rightful welfare of all, the decision made by an ethically informed conscience is a "syllogism": the action is rightful because it is a case of a practice which, even if local, conduces to the rightful welfare of all.

### AN IMMANENT THEORY OF DUTIES

The validity of that practice itself turns on whether it is a form of the rightful well-being of all. This second part of the verdict is rendered by one special component of the moral community—the (Hegelian) moral philosophers—for it is they who furnish the "immanent theory of duties" which it requires. The point of the immanent theory of duties called for in *PhR* § 135 *Anm.* is to explain, for individual duties, why they are duties. This immanent theory is thus the remainder of the *Philosophy of Right* itself (*PhR* § 147; see also Rawls 2000, 351). Its contrast with "unscientific" theories of duties is that while both kinds of theory take their material from existing (forms of interpersonal) relations, the "unscientific" theories, like "unscientific" definitions, go on to examine how those relations capture personal representations and commonly encountered principles and so forth. The immanent theory, by contrast, relates that same material to the idea of "substantial freedom," that is, the capacity to do one's duty (*PhR* § 149; see also Thompson 2001, 56). It is therefore philosophical or "scientific."

Here we see a further way in which the moral community must recognize the right of the individual conscience to its satisfaction. The earlier function of the community was to show the individual insight what was the proper description of its own action. Now we see that the moral community, as realized in the “scientific” moral philosophers, is to show the individual conscience what its duty is—by showing it how various local practices in fact conduce to the good of all. And this is the job of the *Philosophy of Right*. Just as a handbook of science shows the individual what the scientific community has determined to be truth (see *PhR* § 137), so Hegel’s *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (its full title) shows the individual what her duty is—and why.

When Hegel says that moral theory is not for the purpose of “lecturing” (*Belehren*) the world on how it ought to be,<sup>57</sup> he is not denying to it all capacity to change the world. His moral theory is undertaken in the spirit of two dicta from Aristotle: the claim that “we are inquiring not that we may know what virtue is but in order that we may become good” and the claim that “in conduct our task, starting from what is good for each, is to make what is without qualification good good for each.”<sup>58</sup> What is without qualification good is at this stage the capacity of all to act for the good—the following of the empty moral law. It is made good for each through the self-organization of the moral agent, in which each component of ethical life is validated as either contributing to or expressing such freedom. Hegelian moral theory, though inspired by and in many details following on Aristotle, thus aims to fulfill the rights of modern subjectivity: to show the individual why what society demands of her is good—when it is.

It may not always be. As Steinberger (1985, 152) puts it, Hegel agrees with Kant that moral conduct “must be freely willed, that it must be chosen by an autonomous moral agent, and further, that this requires action to be based, not on some kind of arbitrary decision, nor on impulse or caprice, but rather in a rationally discovered and justified principle.”<sup>59</sup> These are *universal* principles (see *PhR* § 148 *Anm.*). The discovery of moral principles comes about through the historical process Hegel calls the “Idea,” and the Idea is general enough to stay the same in all societies; it is the “eternally self-perfecting and perfected coming-to-correspond” of thought and reality (13:150/110).<sup>60</sup> Those contemporary societies which have not explicitly uncovered it are, for Hegel, historical laggards. Hegel is thus not, *pace* Walsh and others, a moral relativist.<sup>61</sup> But the Idea is a general activity, not any of its specific results. As such, its basic principle is—like the willing of the will which constitutes autonomy for

Hegel—not committed to any fixed content. It is this emptiness which, when placed at the core of the dynamics of modern societies, allows them to accommodate pluralism without giving it free rein; it is the ground of what we saw Hegel call the “prodigious strength” of the modern state: “The idea of the state in modern times has the distinctive characteristic that the state is the actualization of freedom not in accordance with subjective caprice but in accordance with the [empty] concept of the will, that is, in accordance with its universality” (*PhR* § 260 *Zus.*).<sup>62</sup>

But if Hegel is no relativist, he is a fallibilist. To say that the ethical universal is the process of coming to moral truth, rather than any of the truths actually attained, allows him to say that modern societies, having based themselves on the idea of freedom, are the most advanced that history has produced. But it follows from his view of the openness of the good that this may not always be so. As Wood (1990, 34) puts it:

If human self-understanding is always growing, and if the action based on it is always modifying and deepening the nature of human beings, then [the Hegelian philosopher] must confess that our present self-conception is inadequate, in ways that we can never hope to repair, for deciding the good of future human beings.

Some new fundamental ethical principle may be discovered tomorrow which is better and “higher” than the autonomy of the self-willing will—in which case, the age which makes that discovery will be higher and better than our own. That is part of the meaning of the famous invocation of the Owl of Minerva at the end of the preface to the *Philosophy of Right*. Again as Wood (1990, 221) puts it, “every system of ethical life is transitory and conditioned by the extent to which spirit has reached self-knowledge in that time and place.” Unlike Kant, then, Hegel cannot legislate morality to future generations. Though the idea stays the same, the duties connected with it may vary.

Barbara Herman (2007d, 44) has said for Kant, in words which also apply to Hegel, “Local value has moral standing as it does or can express the value of rational agency.” Up to now, I have spoken as if the relation of a duty to the good was teleological: a duty is good if it furthers the rightful welfare, that is, the freedom, of all. A local value such as education, which is not found in all societies, has moral standing in that it conduces to moral agency.<sup>63</sup> But to capture Hegel fully, we would have to add that local values also have moral standing if they express moral agency which has already been achieved. Here we see the full scope of Hegel’s forcing of Kant into Aristotelian categories. For

“conducting to” and “expressing” moral agency are two types of paronymy for Aristotle—derivative ways in which a predicate can apply to a thing:

Everything is healthy which is related to health, one thing in the sense that it preserves health, another in the sense that it produces it, another in the sense that it is a symptom of health, and another because it is capable of it. (*Metaphysics* 1003a34–b1)

Of these four, two precede the state of being healthy: that which produces health and that which is capable of it; and two follow on it, in that they preserve or express it. Hegelian ethical theory appeals to both of these: local values are “good” not if they directly exhibit Kantian moral agency—for that is too abstract to be exhibited—but if, like education, they conduce to it or, like patriotism, follow from it (*PhR* § 268).

To accept this view is to embrace what I call the “openness of the good” and redirects moral philosophy in an ethical direction—that is, to a critical concern with concrete practices. To see how this works, I will venture a few steps into Hegel’s discussion of ethical life.

## ETHICAL LIFE AND THE NATURE OF MARRIAGE

The *Philosophy of Right*’s section on “Ethical Life,” not surprisingly, exhibits Hegel’s general schema of utterance. The fundamental norms of ethical life are first formulated within the family; then they are submitted to external reality in civil society; and finally they are reformulated and secured in the state. A brief discussion of the first stage of the family—marriage—will show how this functions.<sup>64</sup>

Marriage, for Hegel, is first and foremost a way of coping with nature. It shares this characteristic with all of “objective spirit”; that we are as moral beings as well as natural ones is implicit in the very title “Ethical Life” (*das sittliche Leben*). The morally most important aspect of life, and the one with which marriage is explicitly concerned, is the highest of the biological functions: reproduction (*PhR* § 161).

Reproduction in natural beings is for Hegel, as for Aristotle,<sup>65</sup> intimately associated with death: “The genus preserves itself only through the destruction of the individuals who, in the process of generation, fulfill their destiny and in so far as they have no higher destiny, in this process meet their death” (*Enz.* § 370). In natural reproduction—an act which most plants and animals do not

survive—the individual dies but creates a new member of its species, and this goes on forever, as what Hegel in the passage just quoted goes on to call the “spurious” infinite.” Among humans, both these aspects of reproduction are present but transformed. The individual “dies” not physically but in the sense of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

Whatever is confined within the limits of a natural life cannot by its own efforts go beyond its immediate existence; but it is driven beyond it by something else, and this uprooting is its death. Consciousness, however, . . . is something that [intrinsically] goes beyond limits, and since those limits are its own, it is something that goes beyond itself. (3:74/51; translation altered)

Self-transcendence, the giving up of components of one’s identity, is the spiritual equivalent of what death is in nature. Marriage is one form of self-transcendence; in marriage, the individuals die not physically but in that they leave their old selves behind in order, as we will see, to create a new person. This “objective origin” of marriage means that it outlives the personal motives with which it “subjectively” began (*PhR* § 162).

### MARRIAGE AS LIBERATION

Marriage is thus a pathway to moral agency. That is what justifies it ethically for Hegel; the enhancement of moral agency in general is a process of liberation: first from dependence on “mere natural drives” and second from the indeterminacy of inactive, and so impotent, subjectivity (*PhR* § 149). As Hegel puts it in the *Lectures* from 1819/20: “Ethical living together on the part of human beings is their liberation” (*RPh1819/20*, 131). In the case of marriage, that path begins in something subjective—in general, either in a family’s need to prolong and enhance itself through a marital alliance or in the mutual attraction (*Neigung*) of two people (*PhR* § 162 *Anm.*). In the former case, by which Hegel means arranged marriage, attraction ideally follows on the betrothal, so that mutual attraction is never wholly absent (and, indeed, is more important to the partners than the rational calculations of their parents). Both, then, should be present: attraction instigated and guided by such rational calculation, however, is more rational and so more “ethical” than the attraction caused by what Aristotle called the “pleasure of the eye.”<sup>66</sup>

The kind of attraction which leads to marriage is not necessarily, for Hegel, exclusively sexual. Though at *PhR* § 163 he characterizes it as the “natural drive,”

he also calls it “sensibility” (*Empfindung*), which can be glossed as the mind’s awareness of bodily messages in general (*PhR* § 161 *Zus.*; see also *Enz.* §§ 399–400) and as “passion,” in which one’s entire being (*alle Saite seines Wesens*) is focused on another person (*PhR* § 162); it could just be delight caused by the presence or thought of another person, whether sexual or not. In any case, Hegel is very definite that it is “transient, capricious, and merely subjective” as well as “contingent” (*PhR* §§ 161 *Zus.*, 163).

Such mutual attraction, whatever its nature, is not destined to last; in the permanent framework of a marriage, it is fated “to be extinguished in its own satisfaction” (*PhR* § 163). As the young Hegel had put it in his admittedly chauvinistic way, in marriage “the woman comes to be a being in her own account for the man. She ceases to be simply an object of desire”;<sup>67</sup> we may note that the same, *mutatis mutandis*, is obviously true for the man. When I am part of a married couple, I can no longer care only about my own satisfactions; I must care, and indeed care more, about the other person and about our relationship, and in this “the consciousness emerges from its naturalness and subjectivity to concentrate on the thought of the substantial. Instead of reserving to itself the contingency and arbitrariness of sensuous inclination, it removes the marriage bond from this arbitrariness and . . . makes itself over to the substantial; it thereby reduces the sensuous moment to a merely conditional one—conditioned, that is, by the true and ethical character of the relationship, and by the recognition of the marriage bond as an ethical one” (*PhR* § 164 *Zus.*).

In entering into a marriage, the partners thus resolve to “*constitute a single person*” (*PhR* § 162), and Hegel’s italics indicate that this is no mere metaphor. All aspects of my previous personality are left behind in marriage; even those that persist are no longer important. The married couple share all their property (*PhR* § 171), which means that their bodies, the physical bases of all their actions, are not the exclusive property of either. Even “natural events” that would normally produce shame are spoken of freely within marriage (*PhR* § 163 *Zus.*), and this gives the self what Hegel calls “determinate existence” with respect to them (see 3:376/308–309; *Enz.* § 462 *Zus.*).

As an ethical phenomenon, then, marriage is the sacrifice of one’s own natural being in favor of a (slightly) wider community, and as such is the liberation (*Befreiung*) of the partners (*PhR* § 162). By replacing the transient caprice of mutual attraction with a stable relationship, marriage purifies the “natural drive” in the double sense of *PhR* § 19: it loses its transient form and comes to

be aroused by the “substantial” content of the beloved’s character. Instead of a passion incited from without, attraction becomes an enduring component of one’s own character; and it also, of course, loses force, “extinguished in its own satisfaction.” It thus becomes integrated with the rest of the individual’s character, so that individuality is not suppressed but enhanced within the determinate intersubjectivity of marriage.<sup>68</sup> Marriage thus plays a powerful role in the self-constitution of the moral agent, and getting married is a duty (see *PhR* § 162 *Anm.*, directly after the statement that marriage is “liberating”). More than that: marriage is “one of the absolute principles on which the ethical life of a community is based” (*PhR* § 167 *Anm.*).

In order to fulfill this ethical mission, marriage must have two characteristics: it must be monogamous,<sup>69</sup> and it must be lifelong. Monogamy is required because of the global nature of the surrender of self that marriage brings with it; the surrender must, in order to be global, be “undivided” (*PhR* § 167). The reason for this is most forcefully articulated not by Hegel but in Plato’s *Symposium*. If I have a plurality of partners, I will inevitably begin comparing them to one another, which distances me from the relationship; my comparative faculty (*logismos*) stands over and above it. Thus, for Plato, to be a lover of many people is not to love any of them but the beauty (*to kallos*) in them (*Symposium* 210a–b). The difference, of course, is that Plato thinks this is good; Hegel thinks it is bad. Thus, in the *Lectures* from 1819/20, Hegel condemns polygamy because the wife gives up her entire personality (*RPh* 1819/20, 140) but does not receive the same in return: the wives in such a marriage do not stand over and above the husband the way he does over them. Not only is the symmetry of the relationship destroyed but, as Hegel puts it in 1824/25, a polygamous wife “does not receive the entire undivided total personality of her husband.”<sup>70</sup> This is perhaps why Hegel’s account of marital surrender in the *Philosophy of Right* does not mention philosophy’s most famous treatise on love.<sup>71</sup>

The other thing marriage must be, in order to achieve its ethical mission, is lifelong; for the only reason to dissolve a marriage is that the partners have become antagonistic to one another (*PhR* § 176), and the whole purpose of marriage is to displace sentiment, even if antagonistic, in the personalities of the spouses (*PhR* §§ 173 *Zus.*, 176). A marriage undermined by strong feelings of antagonism has thus failed in the ethical function of marriage and can be dissolved.<sup>72</sup> Divorce should, however, be made as difficult as possible to obtain (*PhR* § 163 *Zus.*). It must be granted not by the partners themselves but by dispassionate ethical authorities who are not part of the relationship (*PhR* § 176).

In ethical life, as we have seen, the moral community has two functions: to provide the individual with channels through which he can organize himself as a moral agent and to determine whether or not a given individual act was a case of some particular social practice. The former function, we saw, is completed when the ethical channels offered by a particular community find their validation in ethical philosophy's "immanent theory of duties." The latter function is performed by the community when it "recognizes and confirms" the marriage by certifying that the ceremony which launches it was a valid one (*PhR* § 164 and *Anm.*). Only when recognized in this way does the marriage become a really existing ethical bond; prior to that a loving relationship has no sanction beyond the desire of the partners. Thus, my beloved and I can stand up in front of anyone and recite all kinds of vows; but until the community in general agrees that our actions constitute a marriage ceremony, we are not married. Marriage requires a public declaration and falls under the linguistic schema we saw first advanced in the *Phenomenology*: to utter something is to give one's thoughts over to the community, and my meaning is what the community says it is rather than what I intend by my utterance.

### THE HISTORY OF MARRIAGE

Like everything else in the modern world, these characteristics of marriage are the outcome of a painfully long process of trial and error. Hegel does not attempt a full history of the different forms marriage has taken down through the millennia the way he does for art, religion, and philosophy but confines his discussion to "remarks" and "supplements." Placing what he says on a time line shows, however, that there is a rough development among these now-discredited alternatives.

The most primitive view of marriage sees it in animalistic terms, as strictly a sexual relation (*PhR* § 161 *Zus.*). This is not marriage at all but concubinage: an ongoing arrangement for satisfying the sexual drive.

A next level would be exogamous marriage, which at least deserves to be called "marriage" because it is, as it were, half in and half out of the natural world. Marrying within your family is naturally counterproductive because it results in weakened offspring (*PhR* § 168 *Zus.*); and it is ethically deficient because members of a family are defined against one another, not as individually distinct personalities but in terms of roles they have played from birth (*PhR* § 168).<sup>73</sup>



The distinction between endogamy and exogamy is thus at once both natural and ethical. When it is made, we can view marriage as the relationship between two bloodlines or houses; and in this approach, too, we find a distinction between what is natural and what is ethical (*PhR* § 162 *Zus.*). Some parents, especially in cultures where women are “held in little esteem,” arrange marriages for their children without consulting them. The result of this is that the child remains defined naturalistically as a child, playing the natural and abstract role assigned by the family: “The girl wants only to find *a* husband, and the man wants only to find *a* wife” (*PhR* § 162 *Zus.*; emphasis added). Others adopt something akin to the approach we have already seen Hegel identify as “more ethical”: they introduce their children to a prospective mate, but if mutual attraction does not develop they go no further (*PhR* § 162 *Anm.*). The decision not to go further, however, belongs to the parents alone.

These two traditional forms of marriage are opposed not merely to concubinage but to the more developed views of marriage in the modern world, where individuals have rights against their families. There are two main ways in which one can view marriage as an individual commitment. One of these is to view it as exclusively grounded in being in love. This approach, whose defects we have already seen, can, as with Friedrich Schlegel, go so far as to deny that the community has any rights in a marriage at all, even that of recognizing it in a ceremony (*PhR* § 164 *Zus.*). The individual can also abandon sentiment altogether and view marriage in the cold terms of individual rationality: as a contract. This view is based on the image of the contracting individual as a self-sufficient unit whose basic nature never changes (*PhR* § 163 *Anm.*) and so denies the very nature of marriage as the free self-surrender of individuality. Kant’s adoption of it was “disgraceful” and “crude” (*PhR* §§ 75 *Anm.*, 161 *Zus.*).

## UNIVERSALITY AND PARTICULARITY IN HEGELIAN ETHICS

We are now in a position to examine briefly the interplay of universality and particularity in Hegel’s ethical philosophy.

First, the drive to freedom—to giving self-willing will a place in nature—is universal, for as the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* shows, its efforts are coextensive with the history of Spirit itself. Freedom as self-willing will which formulates its plans, submits them to reality, and reformulates them in the light of the feedback it receives is, as we saw, the practical side of the Idea itself and,

as we have also seen, is implicit in the schema of utterance: any speaking animal decides what to say, says it, and collects feedback from its hearers, so any speaking animal has a drive to freedom.

Second, the drive to formulate the nature of freedom *explicitly*—to “make its freedom into its object”—is part of this overall drive and as such can be called the “absolute drive” of the free spirit (*PhR* § 27). When that drive is rationally validated, it, like others, becomes a duty; but such validation had to await the labors of history. The consciousness of freedom, enabled by the word itself, which gives it “determinate existence,” arises only with the Greeks (12:31/18); prior to that, freedom was merely “something obscure, fermenting” in the depths of self and society (see *Enz.* § 462 *Zus.*). A couple more millennia were required to formulate its current definition—indeed, as we will see in the next chapter, the true definition had to await Kant. Until “freedom” was correctly defined, freedom itself was inaccessible to thought; it could neither be taken as a conscious goal nor rationally validated. In neither case could there be a duty to seek freedom. The duty of freedom, unlike the drive for it, is therefore historically specific.

Third, the specific duties that anyone has, being rationally validated drives, have been worked up out of our encounters with nature by the trial-and-error of history. They may thus vary from society to society, and none of them is intrinsically universal. Thus, we find in modern Western societies the legal institution of marriage as a lifetime contract between two people. The Hegelian ethical philosopher can say that this Western form of marriage has rational sanction, where it exists, because the legal unification of two individuals into a single one is a conduit to freedom itself; for it amounts to the conversion of natural bonds of passion and sentiment into more lasting, “spiritual” bonds. Western marriage, as an ideal of lifelong monogamy, thus engages the spouses more completely than any other form of marriage, and those who live in Western societies have a duty to enter into marriages of this particular type.

That marriage should be like this is not obligatory, of course, in every society. Ancient Islamic societies, for example, allowed for *nikah mut'a*,<sup>74</sup> or temporary marriage, and some today countenance marriage among up to five people. A Muslim Hegel would thus have had problems that the European, Christian Hegel did not: those of showing how *mut'a* and polygamy, in their own ways, conduce to moral agency.

Permanent, monogamous marriage also exists, of course, in Muslim societies. A society where such marriage was forbidden—where all marriage would

be for a fixed term or must be polygamous—probably does not exist outside the dreams of Plato. In such a society, were it somehow to come about, I would not have a duty to enter into a monogamous or lifelong marriage, because if a social practice has not been posited in society at all, I cannot posit it “in me.” It may be that in such societies, a different “theory of marriage,” showing how temporary and polygamous unions suffice to advance the good of all, would be possible—but that is not Hegel’s problem. If such a theory of marriage cannot be produced, then that society is unfree and its definition of marriage is unsatisfactory—as unsatisfactory as Roman definitions of “human being.”

This does not mean that everything sanctioned by modern society is a duty for its inhabitants. If it were, then we could know our duties simply by consulting the social order, and the *Philosophy of Right*, with its immanent theory of duties, would not have to be written. As the discussion of legal positivism at *PhR* § 3 *Anm.* tells us, “if it can be shown that the origin of an institution was entirely expedient and necessary under the specific circumstances of the time, the requirements of the historical standpoint are fulfilled. But . . . since the original circumstances are no longer present, the institution has thereby lost its meaning and its right [to exist].”<sup>75</sup>

The key word here is “entirely.” Human arrangements do not drop from heaven but are outcomes of history; and history, being specific, changes. Some human arrangements have no other legitimacy than the expediency and necessity which their historical origins provide. It is to distinguish these from those arrangements that, whatever their origin, today lead to and express moral agency that Hegel has written the *Philosophy of Right*.

## CHAPTER 5

### HEGEL'S CRITIQUE OF KANT'S MORAL THEORY

IT SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE that even in the domain of moral philosophy, where its importance is highest, Hegel's critique of Kant probably matters more to us than to him. Hegel's higher praise of other philosophers and the impressionistic character of his reading of Kant have indicated this all along, as has the fact that when he targets Kant, he often takes him as an example of something more generic. This is especially true in the *Philosophy of Right*, where Kant is assigned to a philosophical approach variously described as "formal" thinking (*PhR* § 2 *Anm.*), the "philosophy of reflection" (*PhR* § 15 *Anm.*), the practice of "abstract reflection" (*PhR* § 124 *Anm.*), and, of course, "morality" (*PhR* § 33 *Anm.*). In Chapter 3 we saw this approach slide from Kant through Fichte to its nadir in the "bad idealism" of Bouterwerk, Fries, and Krug. Since Hegel's most vigorous condemnation of them all is on moral grounds, it is not surprising that their approach should show up again in Hegel's ethical theory. Kant is thus interesting to Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right* not primarily in his own right but for the abstract, formalistic approach to ethics that he exemplifies.

This, plus the fact that Hegel's own distinctive philosophical project furnishes the basis for his criticisms of Kant, means that those criticisms are presented in three different ways. There are, certainly, the criticisms in which Kant is explicitly identified as the target; but our account cannot be limited to these. They are complemented by criticisms which, as just noted, apply to Kant indirectly, in virtue of the philosophical genus of which he is (or is asserted to be,

or probably is) a member. Other criticisms, finally, are “presented” as buried, in the sense that they are not explicitly stated but are presupposed either by criticisms Hegel does make explicitly or simply by the contrasts—present on virtually every page of Hegel—between what he says and what Kant says. If Hegel’s treatment of an issue differs from Kant’s, then Kant—at least in Hegel’s view—got it wrong.

One of these buried criticisms is particularly important. As I argued in Chapter 1, Hegel’s own way of doing philosophy provides more than the *stand-point* from which he identifies problems with Kant and undertakes to correct them. It provides as well the *standard* by which he judges Kant.<sup>1</sup> Chapter 4 showed this standard at work in the *Philosophy of Right*, for when Hegel criticizes Kant for his inability to provide an “immanent theory of duties” (*PhR* § 135 *Anm.*), he has in mind the kind of “theory” he himself intends to produce. Hegel’s most general criticism of Kant is thus that he is not doing philosophy Hegel’s way. Instead, Kant proceeds in what Hegel, in the *Science of Logic*, calls a *lemmatisch* fashion—presupposing his starting points rather than validating them philosophically (5:40/47). Nor, having begun where he should not, does he go on from his abstract moral theory to define correctly the determinations of ethical life. Kant has therefore produced only a stretch of the true system, rather than its entirety.

Seen in this way, Hegel’s critique of Kant’s moral philosophy has eight major components, of which the first four are “buried”:

- I. Kant does not relate his moral theory to what, in “true philosophy,” should have preceded it. Rather than beginning with a systematically correct definition of morality’s basic principle, the will, Kant hangs his moral philosophy, so to speak, in the air.
- II. In particular, Kant does not define will naturalistically, as we saw Hegel do. It belongs to a “noumenal” realm conceived as wholly separate from the empirical domain in which we live, decide, and act.

These first two criticisms of Kant’s moral theory are not stated by Hegel but are presupposed by his further criticisms. Two more “buried” criticisms are evident from fundamental contrasts between Hegel’s account and Kant’s:

- III. Kant’s moral theory lacks an account of what I called the self-organization of the moral agent; it does not tell us how we can strengthen our moral agency by integrating it with other drives into a coherent whole of duties.

- IV. Kant also lacks an account of moral action; his moral philosophy is restricted to “determinations of the will” which show up not in what we actually do but in the internal adoption of moral “maxims.”

What underlies these, as I suggested in Chapter 4, is a respect for Aristotelian paronymy. It is as if Kant had treated of physical health without examining what produces it or expresses it.

Two more criticisms are made, not of Kant specifically but of the general approach which he exemplifies:

- V. Kant's moral philosophy is, like that of Fichte and others, “formalistic,” which means not that it is too formal but that, having correctly stated the formal nature of will, it does not have the systematic resources needed to reintroduce content into morality.
- VI. In particular, Kant's account of moral motivation is rigoristic, that is, it relies on an “opposition” between moral and nonmoral motivations.

Finally, two criticisms are made specifically and explicitly against Kant:

- VII. Kant's account of moral duty (the categorical imperative) remains empty. This does not mean that the categorical imperative cannot help us in making moral decisions; it can. What it cannot do is give rise to moral philosophy in an Hegelian sense, as an “immanent theory of duties.”
- VIII. The social philosophy which arises from all this is centered not on freedom but on coercion.

I will discuss these in turn, reserving the last for the conclusion to this chapter.

## I. KANT'S FAILURE TO DEFINE “WILL”

Kant characterizes the will in various ways, depending on the context: as the faculty of goals (*Zwecke*), as the capacity to act consciously according to rules, as practical reason itself, as reason viewed as a cause, and so on.<sup>2</sup> One characterization, at the beginning of the *Groundwork*, is basic enough to be taken as a definition of will:

Everything in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the capacity to act in accordance with the representation of laws, that is, in accordance with principles, or has a will. Since reason is required for the derivation of actions from laws, the will is nothing other than practical reason. (AA, 4:412; see also Herman 2007a, 168–169).

If we take this as Kant's "definition" of the will, then Kant has, like Hegel, "cast back" to his earlier account of reason and defined will as a modification of that. So far, so good. But what, then, is "reason"? Béatrice Longuenesse (2000, 256) has pointed out that in the *Critique of Pure Reason's* section on "Reason as Such" (CPR B, 355–368), Kant characterizes "reason" in no fewer than three main ways: "It is a logical or discursive capacity to form mediate inferences. It is a faculty of principles. It is a faculty of the unconditioned." Kant does not here bring these three formulations together into a unified definition, but it is relatively easy to do so: they amount to saying that reason is the faculty which grasps principles (*Prinzipien*) as principles, which means grasping their roles in grounding mediate inferences<sup>3</sup> and seeing how they are themselves grounded in higher, and ultimately unconditioned, principles. Reason for Kant is thus what Hegel could call the systematic grasp of principles.

But this is a case of *obscurum per pariter obscurum*, because now we do not know what a "principle" is. *Prinzip* for Kant is an ambiguous term (see CPR B, 356) in that empirical propositions can be *used as* principles—that is, other propositions can be deduced from them—without actually *being* principles (CPR B, 356–357). From this we gather that a principle in the strict sense is an a priori proposition used as a premise in inferences. The problem is that Kant himself has not told us this; he has not pursued the meaning of "will" into an exact definition. The various "definitions" he gives, then, are loose, context relative, and even sloppy—as is suggested by Longuenesse's reference to Kant's "main" definition of reason, which suggests that there are others elsewhere, and by her subsequent reference to them all as "characterizations" rather than definitions.

Kant's looseness is no mere bad habit but is grounded in a general skepticism concerning definitions. Neither empirical nor a priori concepts can be defined, because any definition must be adequate to its object, and we can never be sure that our terms have captured their object completely (CPR B, 756–757). In making this claim, Kant trades on a view of definition which we have seen Hegel reject: that the sole criterion of the validity of a definition is that it capture "prevailing representations." In the case at hand, what the definition is to capture would be our consciousness of the legislation of the moral law, an experience for which Kant, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, claims a great deal:

Consciousness of this fundamental law may be called a fact of reason because one cannot reason it out from antecedent data of reason . . . and because it forces itself upon us of itself as a synthetic a priori proposition that is not based on any intuition. . . . It is not an empirical fact but the sole fact of pure reason

which, by it, announces itself as originally lawgiving. The fact mentioned above is undeniable. . . . One need only analyze the judgment that people pass on the lawfulness of their actions in order to find that . . . their reason, incorruptible and self-constrained, always holds the maxim of the will in an action up to the pure will. (AA, 5:31)

One point that Hegel *could* make against this, as we saw in Chapter 3, is his standard epistemological objection to “bad idealism”: that experience, even of the “facts” of our own consciousness, is always infected with at least possible contingency. Kant denies such contingency when he says that the fact he has adduced is “undeniable,” and goes further still in continuing that “this principle of morality, just on account of the universality of the lawgiving that makes it the formal supreme determining ground of the will regardless of all subjective differences, is declared by reason to be at the same time a law for all rational beings insofar as they have a will” (AA, 5:32).

Kant is not simply resting moral obligation on an individual experience (“*you* are obligated”), then, but on the fact that that experience is one of universal legislation. How, Hegel might ask, does this “declaration of reason” differ from the “original lawgiving” “announced” by the fact of reason? Does it? Why is the lawgiving (or for that matter reason itself) universal? In any case, Kant is apparently grounding his moral theory on what he admits (AA, 5:31) is a very strange experience. What if his description of that experience is wrong? What if it is right for those who have it, but there are people (such as me) who have never experienced such universality? The universality in question is beginning to sound like what we saw Hegel call it in Chapter 2: a presupposition, rather than a result, of the critical philosophy. This is all bad enough; when Bouterwerk, Fries, and Krug start using appeals to such experiences to justify things such as anti-Semitism, it gets immeasurably worse.

Hegel *could* have argued this way. But he does not, and his refusal is instructive. Hegel nowhere argues that no one has the kind of experience Kant describes. Nor does he argue that Kant has gotten his description of what at least some people experience wrong. He does not even try to argue that Kant’s entire moral theory is grounded on this experience; our consciousness of the “fact of reason” could well serve, as far as Hegel is concerned, merely as a confirmation of results Kant has argued for elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> The problem with which Hegel is concerned, we see, lies deeper: in order to be philosophically valid, such arguments would need to proceed from a rigorously philosophical definition of “will,” and Kant has not provided that—as is shown by his very need to



appeal to the consciousness of the moral law, even if only as confirmation. Even if Kant got the description right, the underlying problem would remain.

For Hegel, by contrast, a definition is valid if it is formed in a systematic way, and this means defined in terms of other concepts which have themselves been systematically defined. Such a "verified definition" is valid for anyone who has followed the whole sequence up to that point. Prevailing representations, we saw in Chapters 1 and 4, play no role in forming a definition; capturing them is a later, though important, stage. Hegel's own "verified definition" in the *Philosophy of Right*, as we saw in Chapter 4, produced the concept of will out of the abstracting activity of the intelligence. In accordance with the immanent character of his definitional system, he does not start from any experience, even one as sublime as that of moral obligation. Instead, he defines will purely in terms of what has gone before in the system, and accordingly views it as the specification of a faculty which begins in the chaos and confusion of empirical perception and attains autonomy only in "absolute abstraction" (*PhR* § 5) from that world.

## II. KANT'S ACCOUNT OF THE WILL IS NON-NATURALISTIC

Hegel maintains that Kant (and Fichte) correctly understood the will's duality of abstraction and determinacy (*PhR* § 6 *Anm.*), presumably in the form of the difference between the will's universality, on the one hand, and our decisions on particular courses of action, on the other. Since, as we saw in Chapter 4, this is the fundamental nature of will for Hegel, Kant has grasped that correctly; he does not fall into the philosophical depths haunted by the likes of Bouterwerk, Fries, and Krug. But if Kant's account of the will is correct, the achievement is no more than a happy accident, for Kant has arrived at his account in what for Hegel is an unphilosophical way. Instead of a "verified definition" of will, Kant gives us a series of impressionistic characterizations of it in terms of equally impressionistic characterizations of things such as reason and principles. Because he does not rigorously define "will," Kant misses the fact that the definition can be formulated entirely in naturalistic terms—which means that, philosophically considered, will is a modification of natural phenomena. Hegel is thus trying to *retain* Kant's account of will while giving it a naturalistic, rather than a transcendental, basis. In Kenneth Westphal's (1989, 46) terms, he is trying to retain transcendental arguments without transcendental idealism, which means showing

“that certain *natural* traits of the world must be the case in order that we could be self-conscious” in the ways that we are—here, of ourselves as moral agents.

For Kant, the question of a naturalistic basis for will—or any basis at all—is beside the point. Reason’s moral legislation is established by the “fact of reason.”<sup>5</sup> Kant’s aim is not to explain this givenness but to exploit it as the source of moral norms. Thus, he writes, we cannot understand why we have reason in the first place,<sup>6</sup> and we cannot explain how or why it becomes legislative for our actions, that is, becomes will; “it is requisite to reason’s lawgiving that it should need to presuppose only *itself*” (*CPrR*, AA, 5:21). As Kant puts it at the end of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, what we can comprehend about the moral law is its incomprehensibility (AA, 4:463).<sup>7</sup>

What Kant means by incomprehensibility here is that we cannot fathom why the moral law obliges us. To Hegel, the incomprehensibility comes from the fact that Kant has characterized the will in terms of reason but has *de facto* taken reason itself as primitive. Where Kant accepts the incomprehensibility, Hegel sees it as a problem. His solution, as we saw in Chapter 4, is to define the will in terms of a process of abstraction carried to its end. Abstraction, in turn, is defined as the activity of a certain kind of cognitive system (the intelligence) for which naturalistic explanations are readily available.

But this is a matter of where will comes from rather than of what it currently is; on that matter, Kant is, as we saw just above, correct. If Hegel’s aim is to underwrite the Kantian will while removing its Kantian incomprehensibility, he must explain how the moral law obliges us and do so in a naturalistic way. Hegel’s explanation, to be seen in the conclusion to this chapter, will provide a startlingly contemporary payoff for his entire critique of Kant’s moral theory.

There are two further points to make about this criticism of Kant. The first is that it did not originate with Hegel. J. G. Hamann had already pointed out in 1784 that for Kant reason, and so also the will, have no material substrate; they hang in the metaphysical ether, as forms without matter.<sup>8</sup> Hamann’s candidate for reason’s material substrate is language. Hegel remains true to this to the extent that the most important cognitive result of the abstracting activity of intelligence is the (empty) word—and with the word, intelligence assumes its practical function, for utterance is the “deed [*Tat*] of theoretical intelligence” (12:85–86/66).<sup>9</sup> Speech thus unites the theoretical with the practical.

Hegel’s judgment on Kant here is also not particularly severe; others have been much less kind.<sup>10</sup> When Bernard Williams (1971), almost two centuries later, comes to evaluate Kant’s belief that moral thought and action can only

originate somewhere subjective but beyond the empirical self, he writes: "Kant's work is in this respect a shattering failure, and the transcendental psychology to which it leads, where not unintelligible, certainly false. No human characteristic which is relevant to degrees of moral esteem can escape being an empirical characteristic" (23). Allen Wood (1990, 153) is almost as harsh: "Kant falsifies the finitude of the human condition when he attempts to place the good will beyond the reach of nature and fortune."

In contrast to this, Hegel does not even explicitly state his objection to the non-natural character of Kantian will; we must infer it from the naturalistic account he does give (and from the fact that some of his other criticisms follow from it). This is perhaps because Hegel, as I have suggested, is more interested in getting on with his own project than with hitting Kant from every possible angle. But there is another reason: in order to play the role that it must play in the self-organization of the moral agent, the will must as we saw be viewed as independent of what it organizes. At that point, then, the will's origin in the intelligence—or anything else—becomes, if only temporarily, irrelevant. Hegel would hardly go to the lengths of denying that the will has any knowable origin at all—he would hardly say that it "presupposes only itself." But given the irrelevance of what it does presuppose to its role here, such denial would not be the worst of sins.

### III. KANT HAS NO ACCOUNT OF THE SELF-ORGANIZATION OF THE MORAL AGENT

Criticisms I and II are connected in an obvious way: it is Kant's failure to define the will in the first place which leads him merely to postulate its existence and to confirm (or establish) the postulate on the basis of an inner experience of the "fact of reason." That experience, like the postulate, can present the will only as a mysteriously non-natural fact, hanging in the transcendental air. A third criticism of Kant, equally implicit but independent of the other two, arrives when Hegel, in *PhR* § 19, talks about the purification of the drives. For Kant, any stable motive for action beyond the desire to do one's duty because it is one's duty is an "inclination" (*Neigung*). Inclinations are desires and impulses elicited in the human psyche either through some chain of natural causality, such as my desire to eat when my stomach is empty, or (as the *Critique of Practical Reason* tells us) from education (*AA*, 5:40). Inclinations may be more or less refined or coarse (*AA*, 5:39), but from the point of view of Kantian moral theory they all have the same status—none. Hence freedom, as the ability to act independently

of natural causation, must include the ability to act against one's inclinations, which are as such "blind and servile" (AA, 5:118–119).<sup>11</sup>

Nonmoral motivations for Hegel are, as we saw, "drives," and the purification of the drives is what gives them ethical validity. The result of this purification, for Hegel, is a harmonious set of rationalized drives, that is, duties. This is a possibility which Kant, on principle, leaves unexplored. Though in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* he refers to the possibility of the inclinations being brought into a "harmonized whole called happiness" (AA, 6:58), his canonical view of happiness is that it is too contingent and unstable for harmony; otherwise, happiness could be a coherent goal, which it is not.<sup>12</sup> Kant's concept of the highest good (see *CPrR*, AA, 5:111, 113) thus emphasizes the relations of the inclinations to the moral law, not to each other.

To be sure, Kant does not ignore the fact that our inclinations can be educated; the topic comes up in connection with his important concept of the culture of virtue.<sup>13</sup> But "culture" (*Bildung*) there refers to the submission of inclinations to the discipline of reason, not to their integration and organization into a rational whole. Similarly, in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant distinguishes between passions (*Leidenschaften*), which are barely or not at all controllable by reason, and affects (*Affekten*), which simply do not give rise to it (AA, 7:252–253). We could twist this into a distinction between desires that are educable and those that are not. But as Lawrence Hinman (1983) has noted, both are morally characterized here in terms of their opposition to reason—active for the passions, passive for the affects.<sup>14</sup> Sedgwick (2000a, 319) traces this back to the fact that for Kant, reason does not "determine us through and through"; the emotions are for him wholly nonrational, which in turn is a consequence of what Herman calls the "rigid oppositional model" of the relation between reason and the emotions in Kant.<sup>15</sup>

That the self-organization of the moral agent should be so central for Hegel's section on "Morality," and so peripheral to Kant, shows that Hegel's claims that Kant "is confined" to the standpoint of morality do not mean that Kant has philosophically treated all of that standpoint; he has in fact grasped only part of it, and Hegel's presentation of "morality" in the *Philosophy of Right* makes up the lack.

#### IV. NO ACCOUNT OF ACTION

Another part of the standpoint of morality which escapes Kant's grasp as a philosopher of the "abstract understanding" (*PhR* § 124) is the theory of action. As

Roger Sullivan (1989, 23) notes, Kant explicitly refuses to provide a theory of action, since he believes that it would involve empirical matters and so would be unphilosophical.<sup>16</sup> Nor can this defect be remedied from the general standpoint of morality, for which Hegel says (though not in the published version of the *Philosophy of Right*) that some of the conditions of an act are located in the “inner, subjective realm of motives” and hence are severed from objectively observable phenomena by a “gulf” (*Bruch*).<sup>17</sup>

This certainly holds for claims to account for specific actions that people commit; but why does Kant also exempt himself from a *general* theory of action, one which—like Hegel’s—merely recognizes in general terms that any action is conditioned by manifold circumstances and goes on from there?

In fact, as Sullivan has shown, such a general theory of action is implicit in Kant’s moral theory (a fact which, we may note, supports Hegel’s view that moral theory cannot dispense with a theory of action). Kant does not formulate it explicitly because he restricts his moral theory to an account not of action but of the principles of action, that is, of maxims. This general restriction is not adopted simply because it is necessary if Kant is to do the kind of moral philosophy he wants to do but because of what he takes to be the nature of morality itself: the moral law does not prescribe directly to actions but only to maxims for action.<sup>18</sup> Omitting a general theory of action from moral theory is thus justified by a general separation of morality itself from action (a move that Hegel associates with Stoicism; 20:368). The famous opening words of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* state this separation:

It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation except a good will. . . . A good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes, because of its fitness to attain some proposed end [*vorgesetzten Zweckes*], but only because of its volition, that is, it is good in itself. (AA, 4:393–394)

As Kant goes on to recognize, this is counterintuitive in the extreme (“a suspicion must arise that its covert basis is perhaps mere high-flown fantasy”; 4:394). One of its troublesome aspects, as Wood (1990, 142) points out, is that an agent’s responsibility for his actions can only be assigned “indirectly”; he is directly responsible only for adopting his maxim of the moment. Adopting a maxim, being an act of the will, has in turn a special status for Kant; it is what we may call a non-natural act, in that it is not the result of a natural causal chain. In other words, it is Kant’s non-naturalistic view of morality, rather than

merely his undoubted distaste for empirical matters, which leads him to dispense with a general theory of action.

Though Kant does not put it this way, we can say that actions for him are of two radically different sorts: those which are affected by empirical circumstances and those which result merely from freedom. Only the latter kind, the adoption of maxims, has moral status for Kant. Hegel's ethical naturalism means that he cannot divide actions up this way; adopting a maxim is an action like any other, and moral responsibility is not restricted to it. Thus, in Wood's (1989, 472) formula, I am responsible for performing a certain deed under a certain description if I in fact did the deed, if I knew I was doing it under that description, and if I intended to do it under that description (a description which, on my reading, comes from my community).<sup>19</sup> We are thus directly responsible for our actions, and indeed we are nothing more than the sum and sequence of our actions (see *PhR* § 124). So Hegel's development of the standpoint of morality, unlike Kant's, deals with the nature of action and implicitly criticizes Kant for not doing so.

As we saw in Chapter 4, action, on Hegel's view, does indeed take us into the natural realm—which is not a problem for him as it is for Kant, because for him we have never left it. While in the view of morality the individual conscience has the absolute right to determine what is or is not my duty, any action that I perform will be governed by natural circumstances and by various laws and norms. It must submit to both. The external and social environments which condition my actions in this way are complex—complex enough that no one understands his own actions fully. This is why Kant, who also recognized this complexity, exempted the consequences of an action from the consideration of its moral worth, which he in turn located only in the determination of the will which produces them. But for Hegel, it is not only the consequences of my actions which are unclear to me but the determinations of my will themselves. For the move from one's immediate purpose to one's ultimate intention is precarious; we not only do not understand what we do but do not even understand what we will. The point here is not that the agent cannot sincerely know that he has done the right thing in a particular case—that is up to his conscience. What he cannot know, in view of the murkiness of the circumstances in which he acts and the precarious relationship between purpose and intention, is whether his conscience is telling him the right thing. It is the ambiguities and complexities associated with action which require the move from the perspective of the individual moral agent to the social dimensions of ethical life.

## V. FORMALISM

The first four of Hegel's criticisms of Kant, though basic to Hegel's overall critique of him, are not stated explicitly in the *Philosophy of Right*; they are evidenced by the contrast between what he says and what Kant says. The charge of "formalism," which is a general criticism carried over into three more specific ones, is advanced explicitly but not specifically against Kant. Rather, it is directed against the kind of moral theory Kant practices: like Fichte (and certain odious others), he is a *Reflexionsphilosoph*. This means that Kant recognizes the freedom of the will as what Hegel calls formal self-activity (*PhR* § 15), that is, as "pure unconditioned self-determination of the will" (*PhR* § 135 *Anm.*)—characterizations of will which, though Hegel's, are ones with which Kant would agree (see *CPrR*, AA, 5:27–28). As Hegel sees it, the problem with Kant is that this is the only kind of freedom he recognizes. Therefore, freedom for Kant remains "formal."

Formalism for Hegel is a type of dualism, one which posits half of a dichotomy without taking account of the other half (see *Enz.* § 60). What this procedure misses is that form as Hegel defines it is only the first stage of a process in which it passes over into content (*Enz.* § 133; see also 6:86–95/449–456). This view plays a role in the organization of Hegel's system itself. As a glance at the relevant tables of contents in the *Science of Logic* will show, determinations such as ground and cause begin as "formal," then pass over into "real," before finally becoming "absolute." Thus, while form in Hegel's logic is the "completed totality of reflection" (6:86/449) and as such unimpeachable, formalistic philosophy does not pursue it into concrete reality.

The formalism of the Kantian will follows from the non-naturalistic account of ethics that Kant seeks to give, since the will for him becomes empty by being separated from all empirical content. For Hegel, the status of the will as the result of abstraction means that while it is itself empty, it presupposes empirical content (or, in Hegelian jargon, is "negatively related" to such content) because it can only arise through abstraction from it. In the case of freedom, this means, as Wood (1989, 473) puts it, that "Kantian morality seeks to find a freedom which is independent of what is other than freedom, independent of nature and fortune."<sup>20</sup>

In and of itself, Kant's formalism is not a defect from Hegel's point of view; by giving a formal account of freedom, Kant has achieved the "completed totality of reflection" on freedom. Abstract, formal freedom is in fact for Hegel the highest form of freedom, since as abstract it is the culmination of the intelligence's productive activity (*PhR* §§ 5 and *Anm.*, 6 *Anm.*); it is freedom as the

self-willing of the will, which is Hegel's version of autonomy. Kant's mistake is not that will for him *is* formal, but that it *remains* formal—he does not go on from there and show that the highest form of freedom is not its only form—that there are subtypes and gradations within freedom, just as there are with drives.

The question now arises of how Hegel thinks he can do this. There is no single answer to this question, and I will pursue it by considering three further explicit criticisms Hegel makes of Kant, all of which specify the overall charge of formalism: that Kant is overly rigorous in his account of moral motivation, that his version of the moral law is empty, and that the social philosophy to which it leads takes society to be a matter of coercion, not freedom.

## VI. RIGORISM

The moral theory of the “abstract understanding”—again, a philosophical approach which for Hegel includes Kant—views moral motivation in terms of an “opposition” (*Entgegensetzung*) between the universal, “objective” demand for right action, which Kant calls “respect for the moral law”<sup>21</sup> and Hegel calls “duty for duty's sake” (*PhR* § 133), and the various subjective desires and goals a moral agent can have (*PhR* § 124 and *Anm.*). Only the former is moral, which makes Kant a “rigorist” in his view of such motivation.

There are in fact two basic ways to understand Kant's rigorism. One is that he believes, as Barbara Herman has put it, that “an action cannot have moral worth if there is [any] supporting inclination or desire present”—that all moral actions must be performed in the absence of any motive other than duty for duty's sake. The other is that supporting nonmoral motives may be present but that the moral motivation must have been sufficient to produce the action, even if supporting nonmoral motives were not present (Herman 1993b, 1). It is a version of the latter view that Herman attributes to Kant, which does not mean that Hegel does not attribute the other.

What Hegel actually says is that this approach of abstract reflection “fixes this moment [of particularity] in its difference from and opposition [*Entgegensetzung*] to the universal, and so gives rise to [*bringt . . . hervor*] a view of morality as a perennial and hostile struggle against its own satisfaction” (*PhR* § 124 *Anm.*). This seems to be an argument against the first version of Kantian rigorism; for if all that particular, that is, nonmoral, motivations can do is struggle against the universal, that is, moral, motivation, then moral acts when and if they occur must have been produced from the moral motivation alone; other motivations



can only impede. In fact, however, the criticism stated here hits two views. One is the view that "particularity," comprising the subjective interests and desires that Kant calls "inclinations," is different from and opposed to the universal. The other, stronger view is that morality then consists in a hostile struggle of morality against "satisfaction," that is, against those subjective interests and desires.

The stronger view, demanding the elimination of all desires from morality, is perhaps as close as Hegel comes in the *Philosophy of Right* to the charge that Kantian goodness remains a mere unreachable "ought."<sup>22</sup> It is not very close, if only because Hegel—like Herman—is a careful enough reader (for once) not to attribute it to Kant, who says in the *Critique of Practical Reason* that only inclinations which are opposed to the moral law, not all inclinations, must be "broken with" (*Abbruch*; AA, 5:73). The "perennial struggle" view is, as Hegel says, a *view of* (Kant's) morality—the critical view taken by Schiller, whom Hegel quotes here. The Kantian "opposition" of moral to nonmoral motives may lead or "give rise" to this view, when to the (mistaken) criterion of the absence of particular motivations for moral acts we add the (reasonable) premise that such motivations are always present anyhow; since they cannot push us toward morality, their presence can only mean that they push us away from it. But that is not Kant, and Hegel knows it. It is the "opposition" of inclinations to reason, and not their "struggle," which exercises him. I will return to this later.

For the moment, it is hard to see exactly what is to be rejected by Hegel on the second reading of Kant's rigorism. It certainly does not give rise to a "perennial and hostile struggle" between reason and the inclinations, for such struggle is precisely what this reading denies; its concern, in fact, is precisely with nonmoral motives which *support* moral action. Nor does Hegel say that it is unrealistic. Though he seems to believe that people in fact always do act in the presence of motives other than pure duty and indeed says elsewhere that they do, he never quite states that in the *Philosophy of Right*.<sup>23</sup> If people always act with nonmoral motives, then Hegel may be complaining that Kant thinks they sometimes do not; but on Herman's reading, Kant does not have to say this, and if Hegel thinks he does, then he is not reading as carefully as he seems to be.

The conundrum, then, is the following. Hegel clearly criticizes "abstract reflection," a philosophical approach which includes Kant, for instating an "opposition" between universal, moral motives and particular, nonmoral motives. The problem with the opposition, as it applies to Kant, cannot be that this leads to a struggle between moral and nonmoral motivation, because Hegel does not attribute that view to Kant. This means that Hegel does not deny that nonmoral

motives may support moral action, which pushes us to Herman's second reading of rigorism: nonmoral actions may be present and help produce the action, but the moral motivation must have been strong enough to have produced it even in their absence. But Hegel has no grounds for objecting to this. What, then, is the real problem with the "opposition" in question?

Attributing to Hegel the view that morality for Kant is a struggle between reason and the inclinations relies on two reading strategies for the text quoted above. One, which I have already noted, is a conflation of that complaint, which is directed not against Kant but concerns Schillerian views of him, with the broader complaint that the "abstract understanding" imposes an "opposition" between the two. The second strategy is to read "opposition" as inherently conflictual. Is it, for Hegel?

*Gegensatz*, or opposition, is in fact defined in the *Science of Logic* not in terms of struggle but as a combination of identity and difference: we have a *Gegensatz* when a set has two complementary subsets, so that any being which belongs to the larger set must belong to one of the two subsets but not both. In electricity, positive and negative are a case of this: they are the two forms that electrical charges take, and any charge must be either positive or negative but cannot be both (6:55–59/424–427). This is why Hegel (at *PhR* § 124) says that in the moral theory of the "abstract understanding," moral and nonmoral (universal and particular) motivations "exclude" one another. The exclusion, however, has nothing to do with hostility or struggle, any more than a positive electrical charge struggles against a negative one. Hegel's claim that Kant "opposes" the moral incentive to nonmoral incentives is thus entirely separate from his subsequent invocation of a hostile struggle between the two, which as we saw does not even envisage Kant.

If we dismiss the notion of a struggle between reason and the inclinations and read "opposition" as the *Science of Logic* tells us to do, the charge turns out to mean that for Kant, any member of the set of motives for an action must be either (A) moral or (B) nonmoral; and no member can be both. There are then three possibilities for moral motivation; our problem is to find which of the three Hegel attributes to Kant and why he criticizes it. This, in turn, will be a function of which of the three alternatives he himself adopts.

The first possibility, we have seen, is the view that a moral action must come about purely from motives of type A, that is, moral ones. The second is that moral action may come about through the cooperation of motives of both types, with the moral motive somehow predominating. Both these views are predicated on "opposing" moral and nonmoral motivations: no motive can be both. A third

possibility, not discussed by Herman, would be that a moral action can come about entirely through what Kant would call nonmoral motives. This can hardly be attributed to Kant, which is presumably why she does not mention it. As Wood (1989, 462–463) has pointed out, it would miss the point entirely—for even if all our acts were performed from particular motives, an argument that such is the case would still not show why we should attach moral goodness to them. Filling that in would take quite a lot of argument, even for Hegel.

Hegel thus does not believe that moral actions are caused by moral motives, by moral and nonmoral motives cooperating, or by nonmoral motives. His criticism of Kant must come, then, on a different level: the level where it targets the “oppositional” structure of motivation itself for Kant. On Kant’s “oppositional” view, moral and nonmoral motives differ in kind: the nonmoral motives a person can have for performing a given action are desires to bring about a particular state of the world and so depend on empirical experience, bodily constitution (including inclinations), and the like; respect for the moral law alone is universal and objective.

For Hegel, by contrast, the “principle of particularity . . . is just as much identical with the universal as distinct from it” (*PhR* § 124 *Anm.*). It follows, in fact, from Hegel’s naturalization of Kantian ethics that the difference between moral and nonmoral motives must be one of degree rather than kind; universal and particular motives are not complementary sets but poles on a continuum. Kant’s account thus fails to take account of the differences in degree of universality that nonmoral motives exhibit, relegating them all to the same status of nonmoral inclinations. In fact, however, some motives are very particular, while others are far more universal—and, usually, praiseworthy.<sup>24</sup> Pinkard (1988, 134) thus points out that, even on reading B above, Kant is left with an unexplained move from one’s “rational, intentional, reflective concern with his own welfare to his concern with the welfare of all.” Hegel, as we saw in Chapter 4 (and as Dean Moyar [2011, 75] has argued), is trying to replace this jump with a ladder—the ladder from personal happiness to the welfare of all.

Thus, if a politician stays with his wife (1) because she is a trophy beautiful enough to make him more electable, his motivation (or as Hegel would call it, his drive) is more particular—and less ethical—than if he stays with her (2) because she needs him, poor thing, and he wants to feel useful—a situation in which the (imagined) welfare of both is at least in play. More ethical still, because concerned with the good of a wider community, is to stay with her (3) for the sake of the family, including the wife and the children; even more

ethical is to stay with her (4) because he has agreed to do so, and all humans are bound to keep their agreements. Kant, with his contractual view of marriage, would assign moral significance to the last of these alone, whereas Hegel believes that they are not only compatible but (except for the first, which, being solely egoistic, is a defeat for marriage itself) enrich each other.

For Hegel respect for the moral law has the place of an ultimate intention, for it is, as we have seen, my drive to realize the abstract good of all moral agents. The ladder which it shares with more particular motivations is then what I called the ascent from purpose to intention; as my intentions become more and more general, they approach the pure universality of the moral. Their cooperation with the moral law becomes less and less accidental, at least in the sense that they become closer and closer proxies for it.<sup>25</sup>

One way of understanding the ethical purpose of marriage for Hegel, as presented in Chapter 4, is that its purpose is to allow items later in the above sequence 1–4 (and so more universal, and so more rational) to become more dominant in the relationship.<sup>26</sup> That, we saw, is what makes marriage a form of freedom; and the final member of the above sequence of marital motives, for Hegel, would be (5) that staying with his wife is not merely a matter of an agreement but also enables the politician to liberate, or rationalize, himself by acting for the benefit of humanity. When rationality of *this* sort becomes the dominant principle for organizing drives, the drives are in Hegel's sense purified; so Hegel's charge of rigorism is another version of his charge that Kant ignores the self-constitution of the moral agent through the purification of the drives.<sup>27</sup>

Hegel does believe, then, that an action can be moral in the absence of what Kant would recognize as moral motivation, but his deeper belief is that "moral" is a relative term; in the above sequence, (4) is more moral than (3), (3) than (2), and (2) than (1). Hegel does believe that Kant's account of moral motivation is unrealistic—but more unrealistic still, and indeed in the technical Hegelian sense in which "formal" is opposed to "real," was Kant's original formalistic division of motives into moral and nonmoral.

## VI. EMPTINESS

The "emptiness" charge is the only one made specifically and explicitly against Kant (at *PhR* § 135 *Anm.*, which is the *Philosophy of Right*'s crucial text for it and to which most of this section will be devoted). Again, in view of common misunderstandings, it is important to make clear what Hegel does *not* say.

The moral law, or the categorical imperative, receives three formulations in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.<sup>28</sup> How these formulations relate to each other and to the moral law itself is a matter of some obscurity, but it is clear that the “emptiness charge” cannot be directed against the second formulation of them (always to treat others as ends, never merely as means), which according to Hegel is non-empty because it presupposes that other rational animals, exist—that is, that humans live (*PhR* §135 *Anm.*).<sup>29</sup>

Just what Hegel thinks about the other two formulations (always act according to a maxim which may be a universal law and always act as a member of a “kingdom of ends”) is harder to determine. He does not mention the latter of these, and I will forgo it. Of the first he says, unclearly, that it “adduces [*führt . . . herbei*] the more concrete representation of a situation” but nonetheless “for itself contains no further principle than the absence of contradiction and formal identity” (*PhR* § 135 *Anm.*). The first formulation thus—somehow—exhibits, “for itself,” the same co-presence of formal emptiness and presupposed content that we saw in the second formulation.<sup>30</sup> Hegel thus does not claim that either the first or second formulation of the moral law is truly empty; they function in virtue of content, but the content is presupposed. The emptiness charge thus seems to be directed at something over and above them, namely their “principle”: the abstract emptiness of the will.

Another thing Hegel is not saying is that Kantian moral theory is too empty to provide concrete moral guidance; in fact, he specifically says the opposite: “one may indeed bring in material from outside *and thereby arrive at particular duties*” (*PhR* § 135 *Anm.*; emphasis added).<sup>31</sup> The claim, then, is not that Kantian moral theory lacks content but that it gets its content in the wrong way: “from outside.” Thus, to take an example which, though originally Kant’s, is dear to Hegel:<sup>32</sup> if we have the institution of deposits, which allows one person to leave his property with another person and get it back at any time, the Kantian moral law tells us that deposits must be honored; what it does not tell us is whether there should be such things as “deposits” in the first place (*PhR* § 135 *Anm.*). That knowledge comes “from outside.”

Hegel thus does not think that Kant tries and fails to show that stealing the deposit that your now-deceased friend left with you in confidence is somehow self-contradictory. Both Korsgaard and Wood attribute this view to him—Wood relying directly on the natural law essay of 1802 and Korsgaard relying on H. B. Acton’s account of it.<sup>33</sup> They take Hegel to be claiming that Kant needs to show that the idea of a society in which there are no deposits is somehow

contradictory, and both locate the real contradiction in play here elsewhere—in the discrepancy between willing deposits in general and violating that in a particular case by appropriating one.

Nowhere in the text at hand, however, does Hegel say that Kant has failed to generate the necessary contradiction. Indeed, he explicitly accepts *both* the view that the contradiction is the sole criterion for morality<sup>34</sup> and the view that Kant has established the required contradiction: “But if it is already established and presupposed that property and human life should exist and be respected, then it is a contradiction to commit theft or murder” (*PhR* § 135 *Anm.*). Then—only then—he adds: “A contradiction must be a contradiction with something, that is with a content that is already present as an established principle. Only to a principle of this kind does an action stand in a relation of agreement or contradiction” (*PhR* § 135 *Anm.*).

O’Hagan (1987, 140), then, has captured the situation: “The standard of non-contradiction can be applied only when a given institution or practice (in this case private property) is presupposed. . . . The “content” for [Kant] is imported more or less accidentally from a given social order.”<sup>35</sup> Hegel, in short, agrees with Kant that if people universally did not honor deposits there would be no deposits, and agrees with Kant that universal dishonoring of deposits would constitute a contradiction (see Korsgaard 1996d, 86); but he then goes beyond Kant and asks a different question: Why should there be deposits in the first place?

We can make headway by asking, for whom would this question be a concern? Not for the moral agent trying to decide whether it is moral to appropriate his friend’s deposit, for Hegel has no problem with using the categorical imperative to decide whether specific actions are moral or not. True, specific contents must be presupposed—but that is no problem; as Moyer (2011, 18) puts it, immediacy is for Hegel “a mark of successful moral agency.” As we saw in Chapter 4, Hegel insists that moral agents are human beings who act in a real world which, in our case, includes deposits:

Since action is an alteration which ought to exist in a real world, and so wants to be recognized in that world, it must altogether conform to what has validity in it. Whoever wishes to act in this reality has, just in that, submitted to its laws, and has recognized the right of objectivity. (*PhR* § 132 *Anm.*)

Someone wishing to act—say, to appropriate a deposit left with him in confidence—has already accepted the relevant laws and institutions. The emptiness of the moral law is thus problematic, not in the context in which Ameriks,

Korsgaard, Sedgwick, and Wood view it<sup>36</sup>—that of applying the moral law to specific circumstances—but in a very different one: that of systematic moral philosophy in the Hegelian vein. This, as we have seen, must take the form of what Hegel calls here “an immanent theory of duties.” It must show that the concrete norms and practices of our society are aids to and expressions of freedom. Unlike a moral agent, the Hegelian philosopher cannot simply presuppose their actual existence.

This brings us to yet another common misunderstanding of Hegel: that he thinks “any wrong or immoral mode of action” can be justified by the moral law.<sup>37</sup> He does say something like this at *PhR* § 135 *Anm.*, but the German of the final sentence below is vaguer than the translation I will cite (Hegel 1991). *Alle unrechtliche und unmoralische Handlungsweise* can be translated as “all sorts of”; if Hegel had wanted to say “all without exception” he could have written *jede*. The entire passage runs as follows:

From this point of view no immanent theory of duties is possible. One may indeed bring in material from outside and thereby arrive at particular duties, but it is impossible to make the transition to the determination of particular duties from the above determination of duty as absence of contradiction, as formal correspondence with itself, which is no different from the specification of abstract indeterminacy, and even if such material is taken into account there is no criterion within that principle for deciding whether or not this content is a duty. On the contrary it is possible to justify any wrong or immoral mode of action by this means.

As its opening phrase indicates, this passage is about doing moral philosophy—it is about producing an “immanent theory of duties.” It does not concern a moral agent who must decide whether a given *action* is *required* by duty—if Hegel had meant that, he presumably would have written it—but a philosopher who is trying to see whether a particular *content*—a norm or social practice—is a duty, that is, a rationalized drive.

If such a philosopher tries to proceed on a formalistic basis, she will be able to decide that all sorts of norms and practices are duties. For in order to decide about such a norm or practice, the formalistic philosopher must presuppose it, there being no way to derive it from the empty moral law. And once we start making such auxiliary hypotheses, there is no end to it because they are (in O’Hagan’s word) “accidental,” since “an action is something concrete, and one can always find a side of it that allows it to be excused” (*RPh*1819/20, 109). Even

hatred and revenge, Hegel goes on to say in his lectures, can claim grounding in the laudable desire not to be hurt; and a coward at least loves life (*RPh*1817/19, 87).

Suppose I live in a society which requires a woman's immediate relatives to kill her if she has sex outside her marriage. I find out that my sister has secretly been having an affair and tell her that I will not kill her if she agrees to clean my house for the rest of my life. Here, I suggest, we have the same contradiction that Korsgaard and Wood find in the deposits example: I am affirming the general practice of honor killing, since it is what has delivered my sister's life into my hands; but I am denying it in the case at hand. Hegel and Kant would agree that the contradiction is there and that my action is immoral; but, as they would also presumably agree, the real problem lies with the practice of honor killing itself.

The defect of the formalistic approach is not that Kantian moral theory will not tell us what to do. It will. It will tell me that I am here treating my sister as a means, not an end, violating the second formulation of the moral law. This is certainly the case, and with a vengeance, but we can make that judgment only by importing content—the unexceptionable content that my sister, as a human and therefore rational being, should live freely. Such importation is fine if one is trying to figure out what to do in a concrete situation; but it is unacceptable in the context of an immanent theory of duties.

To sum this up: Hegel does say that far too many, if not all, maxims can be justified if we adopt the “formalistic” approach of Kant. But he does not say that the solution to this is to come up with a less empty version of the moral law. Rather, it is to do what he himself has done: stop making random presuppositions about institutions and start validating them as forms of freedom.<sup>38</sup> Hegel, then, has no problem with the emptiness of the Kantian moral law per se.<sup>39</sup> Nor should he, since that emptiness is, as we have seen, what makes it for him the highest form of freedom.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, Hegel's complaints that Kant is surreptitiously importing content into the moral law (as when the second formulation presupposes that human beings should live) can be viewed as claiming that Kant is not keeping the moral law as empty as it should be. Hegel openly criticizes Kant for not keeping to the appropriate level of abstraction at *PhR* § 40 *Anm.*, where he accuses him of bringing ethical relations into matters of abstract right. An example of this would be Kant's “disgraceful” attempt to validate marriage as a form of contract (*PhR* §§ 75 *Anm.*, 161 *Zus.*), instead of as what we have seen it to be for Hegel: the first true establishment of ethical relations.



What, then, is Hegel's solution to the problem that all kinds of content can be justified by the moral law? For Kant, since his moral theory begins with the moral law, further content can come only from the moral law itself. For Hegel the situation is quite different, as we can see by recurring to the deposit example, which is important here because it illustrates precisely where ethical life gets its content. Hegel has in fact deduced the notion of deposits in the *Philosophy of Right's* section on contract (*PhR* § 80). The emptiness of the moral law is remedied not by somehow spinning content from the moral law itself but by using it to take up and justify content which has been produced elsewhere in the system. This content, as first taken up, does not yet have moral status; it is merely the various norms and customs which society, as the result of history, imposes on us. The task for the Hegelian moral philosopher is to show, when and as far as she can, that this imposition is justified because those norms and customs are expressions of, or conduce to, freedom. Kant's problem is that he does not have the kind of system that will enable him to do this, with the result that his appeals to such content amount to random presuppositions.<sup>41</sup>

Hegel, in short, does not raise the charge of emptiness in the context of applying the moral law at all, and Kant's problem is not that he has propounded an empty version of the moral law. It is that having formulated the law appropriately, he does not go on and fill it in, because with his non-natural account of will he has separated the moral law from all content by an unbridgeable divide: that between the empirical and the noumenal realms. As Wood (1989, 473) puts it: "Hegel's fundamental concern in rejecting the Kantian conception of the good will is to prevent our conceiving of the good will as an essentially alienated form of human existence, cut off from both its own sensuous nature and from the real world in which it acts." This means, in particular, that Kant does not use the empty moral law as Hegel uses it: as the philosophical principle of the purification and harmonization of the drives.

## CONCLUSION: THE TRAGEDY OF KANT

Hegel thinks that Kant's "empty" formulation of the moral law was one of his greatest achievements and claims that his own acceptance of it is more consistent than Kant's. The problem he sees is that Kant's formulation is not part of a truly systematic philosophy. Lacking such a system, Kant can only introduce content "from outside." Kant's failure to philosophize in a truly systematic (i.e., Hegelian) way means that he cannot provide a naturalistic definition of will,

and most of Hegel's criticisms of Kant's moral philosophy are then based on the fact that Kant has given a non-natural account of the moral law. As Sedgwick (1988a, 90) notes, "Hegel was convinced that the very nature of Kant's 'abstract' derivation of the moral law from pure reason was responsible for its 'emptiness' both as a determinate guide to action and as an objective guide to moral worth." Actually, as we have seen, Hegel does not think that the moral law is too empty to guide action; rather, it is too empty to serve as the sole foundation of an immanent theory of duties. Nor is it too empty to serve as an objective guide to moral worth; indeed, the ultimate criterion of moral worth *must* be empty in modern societies, for only thus can they cope with their own diversity. As Hegel puts it:

The principle of modern states has this monstrous strength and profundity, to allow the principle of subjectivity to perfect itself into the independent extreme of personal diversity [*Besonderheit*] and simultaneously to lead it back to the substantial unity [of the state], and so to maintain that unity in the principle of subjectivity itself. (*PhR* § 260)

The state cannot do this unless its highest moral imperative is perfectly empty; that is what Hegel means by identifying it, in the quotation above, as the "principle of subjectivity." Consider, for example, premodern European states founded on Christian principles. Their failure, century after century, to grant civil rights to Jews was not a mere contingent result of ignorance and hatred; it followed from the fact that their highest moral principle, the central organizing factor in the lives of the individuals, families, and communities that composed it, was: Be Christian! Any determinate content in the moral law inevitably privileges those to whom it applies, disfavoring others; and this is true today of societies whose highest principle is religious: Be Moslem! Be Hindu! Be Jewish! Or, less religiously: Become wealthy! Or (most depraved of all, because grounded in natural characteristics): Be white!

These slogans betoken battles that are still to be won; it was Kant who showed why they are worth fighting. By making the moral law empty, Kant made it universal and philosophically undid centuries of privilege. But his achievement was tragic, because the empty moral law, for him, came from nowhere and led to nothing. For Hegel, the state is justified not morally but by its strength—but the justification consists in arguing that the strength itself has a moral component. The modern state is strong because its broad array of norms and practices allows *all* individual subjects the freedom to develop themselves

completely in all their diversity, while still having the “substantial unity” of the state—the common good—as a goal to which they can contribute. The state is justified, in short, because it allows different kinds of people—*all* the different kinds—to support one another. This in turn is why the moral law obligates us: we must make the empty categorical imperative into the touchstone of ethics because it is imposed on us by history, which has reached a level—the level of the modern state—in which fundamentally different groups must live together on the basis of equality.

Because Kant has brought the moral law forward from nothing, as a brute “fact of reason,” he can neither explain its obligatory character nor develop it into anything. Hence, he misses things. He misses, for example, the crucial question of how the moral agent organizes herself into a rational system of drives and duties. Also missing in Kant’s philosophy are an account of moral action, the differences in moral worth among more or less universal motives, and an immanent theory of duties. The manifold content of human life—desires, drives, customs, institutions, and the like—becomes in Kantianism merely a set of empirical “inclinations,” all of them nonmoral and none better or worse than the others. Morality can for its part consist only in acting independently of these inclinations; but the nature of action itself—and its attendant complexities—cannot be explained.

Because it is unable to account for action, Kantian moral theory risks becoming a kind of quietism. As Kervegan (1996) puts it, “morality is tempted to renounce all effective action in order to escape the contradictions for which it would allow” (54; my translation). But worse is to come, in the form of Hegel’s final criticism of Kant’s moral theory. What Kant calls “civil society” and seeks to justify with his moral philosophy is not itself a “moral” entity. It is an empirical phenomenon, which means that its principle is not freedom (which can never for Kant appear empirically) but coercion. The purpose of the laws which constitute the “legality” of civil society is to force people to do, on prudential grounds, what they ought to do on moral grounds:

[The “aim” of nature’s mechanism is to guarantee] that what man ought to do in accordance with the laws of freedom but does not do, it is assured he will do. . . . What the task requires one to know is how [the mechanism of nature] can be put to use in human beings in order so to arrange the conflict of their unpeaceable dispositions within a people that they themselves have to *constrain one another to submit to coercive law* and so bring about a condition of peace in which laws have force.<sup>42</sup>

Hence, when in *The Metaphysics of Morals* Kant undertakes to establish relatively detailed sociopolitical structures (in the “Doctrine of Right”), the principle of the establishment is “universal reciprocal coercion” (*durchgängiger wechselseitiger Zwang*; AA, 6:232); when he turns to the level of the individual and to concrete virtues, the principle is “self-coercion” (*Selbstzwang*; AA, 6:379). Such coercion is necessary, of course, because as empirical entities we humans possess inclinations to seek our individual advantage, inclinations which work against the moral law in determining our acts. The operative principle of civil society is to oppose such antisocial inclinations with legally instituted ones (such as the inclination to stay out of jail) and thereby, through a balancing of quasi-Newtonian forces,<sup>43</sup> to cancel them out. Freedom, as the ability to legislate for oneself, thus remains, in Kantian political philosophy, a predicate of human beings qua noumena. Its empirical appearance is, as it must be in the Kantian framework, a form of natural causality which, when affecting human beings, is coercion. At this point, as Stanguennec notes, empirical reality for Kant is not merely different from the noumenal realm of freedom but actively contrasts with it.<sup>44</sup> The two sides, we may say, exclude each other: what either is, the other may not be.

Because the coercion of the empirical realm aims at getting people to do what they should, its goal for Kant is freedom:

A constitution of the greatest human freedom in accordance with laws . . . is at least a necessary idea, which one must place at the foundation, not only in the first project of a state constitution, but also with regard to all laws. . . . Though a [perfectly constituted society] may never come to pass, the idea itself remains completely correct, which posits this maximum as an archetype, in order to bring the legal constitution of man ever closer to the greatest possible perfection, in accordance with the archetype. What the highest level may be at which man must stop, and how great therefore is the gap which necessarily remains open between the idea and its realization—that is a matter which no one can or should determine [in advance]—precisely because it is freedom which can transgress any assigned limit. (*CPR* B, 373–374)

As Kervegan notes (1996, 49), the law is here teleological: it is principled coercion which aims at freedom. But the teleology is, using the term from the *Critique of Judgment*'s account of teleological judgment, only external: the balancing out of forces is teleologically ordered to something quite different from itself, namely freedom.<sup>45</sup> It is only in Hegelian ethical life that the teleology

becomes internal, as a teleology of the will for the sake of the will; but to show that such is the case, Hegel must show how it has already been realized, that is, how what the state actually demands really is what should be done (53–55).

A society which operates strictly on the basis of coercion is one whose laws and social arrangements cannot be affirmed by the individual, who can only, as Hegel says, see them as restraints upon his arbitrary *Willkür* (*PhR* § 26 *Anm.*). Hence, there is no place in Kantian moral theory for the individual rationally to identify with such arrangements or to affirm them (Hoffe 1980, 20). It is not merely that Kant's rule-based morality is not "fine-grained enough" to permit moral assessment, as Herman (1993d, 74) puts it; in Hegel's most trenchant criticism of Kant, he is guilty of criticism VIII: "rendering the point of view of ethical life impossible and in fact expressly infringing and destroying it" (*PhR* § 33 *Anm.*).<sup>46</sup>

That Kant's brilliant achievement in founding morality upon pure abstract emptiness should come to this is tragic indeed. But we are not finished; the moral wreckage of Kant's philosophy will give birth not merely to the resurrection of the moral law as the central principle of ethical life but to the conceptual tools which, in Hegel's hands, will enable that resurrection to be philosophical in nature.

## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

1. These insights may (or may not) in turn be “validated” by identifying them (à la Schelling) as what Béatrice Longuenesse has called “God’s knowledge,” as opposed to the human variety. For Longuenesse, Hegel’s acceptance of intellectual intuition is a truly momentous move, for it signifies nothing less than an abandonment of the “human point of view” so basic to Kant’s philosophy in favor of seeing philosophy as, somehow, the self-knowledge of God (Longuenesse 2000, 253–282). This will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

2. Barbara Herman, introduction to Rawls 2000, xv; Ameriks 2000, 280.

3. See MacIntyre 1964; Taylor 1979, 75–84; and Williams 1971, 23.

4. For Korsgaard (1996a), the “Hegelian objections” to Kant’s categorical imperative are “usually taken to be its most serious problems” (86). For Herman (2007c), Hegel was the first to commit the misreadings of Kant that have led to wholesale rejection of moral theories that prize “formality of principle, necessity of duty, and an account of motivation that transcends psychology” (viii).

5. Papineau 2003, 12; quoted at Glock 2008, 258.

6. Whether Hegel is Papineau’s kind of naturalist awaits further work on Hegel’s philosophy of nature; my expectation is that the answer, as always with Hegel, will be “partly.” Cf. Rand 2007.

7. Pippin (2005, 189–190) has pointed out that Hegel’s philosophy of nature, which stands between Hegel’s logic and his philosophy of right, does not turn many wheels in what comes after. I agree with this. Though, as we will see, one of the main differences between Hegel and Kant is the “naturalism” of Hegel’s moral and social philosophy, nature enters only insofar as it affects us as embodied beings in a natural world—insofar, then, as nature is treated in Hegel’s anthropology and psychology, both parts of his philosophy of spirit. It is there that the wheels are turning.

8. Indeed, it is apparently the absence of alternatives to what he takes as Hegel’s “question-begging absolute idealism” which leads Ameriks to abandon the issue of *Prinzipien* altogether and simply present Hegel’s critique of Kant as a series of isolated criticisms.

9. Hardimon 1994, 10; Neuhouser 2000, 4; Wood 1990, 4–8; see also the comprehensive summary of Anglophone discussions of Hegel at Wallace 2005, xxvi n.5.

10. Preface to *PhR*, 10; §§ 4 *Zus.*, 7 *Zus.*, 8 *Zus.*, 24 *Zus.*, 35 *Anm.*, 47 *Anm.*, 48 *Anm.*,

57 *Anm.*, 78, 88, 95, 123, 124 *Anm.*, 136 *Anm.*, 140 and *Anm.*, 141 *Anm.*, 161, 163 *Anm.*, 181, 272 *Anm.*, and 278 *Anm.* It is notable that these external references diminish as the book goes on, which is to be expected: later developments, just because they are later, are more dependent on what has been explicated in the *Philosophy of Right* itself.

11. Dudley 2002, 246–247 and n.15; Kolb 1986, 39–40; Williams 1997, 7–8.

12. Pippin 1989, 37; see also *ibid.*, 30, as well as Paul Guyer's (1993, 195) comment on the formality, or "emptiness," of reason itself: "What Kant sees as the most important result of his account of pure reason, Hegel sees as its deepest failure."

13. For Hegel's endorsement of such criticisms, as opposed to merely showing that a given system or doctrine is false, see 6:249–251/580–581.

14. Soll 1969, 48–49; quoted approvingly at Ameriks 2000, 273.

15. The present work can thus be viewed as a complement to Sally Sedgwick's recent *Hegel's Critique of Kant* (2012), which like other works in the field concentrates on the early Jena writings.

16. At 13:435–436/334–335 and 15:396–397/1095–1096.

17. Kant, "On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory but It Is of No Use in Practice," *AA*, 8:295n.

18. As this passage shows, Kant uses two words for what I call limits: a *Schranke* is merely something which we cannot do, as when someone can calculate the value of pi to only a hundred places; the hundred and first lies beyond that person's *Schranke*. A *Grenze*, by contrast, is an essential limit: we cannot acquire knowledge of things in themselves because doing so is beyond the very nature of our cognitive powers (*CPR* B, 789). English translations conventionally render *Schranke* as "limit" and *Grenze* as "bound"; but that is misleading in that a "bound" is not something one necessarily wants to go beyond. This is not the case for the *Grenzen* of the cognitive powers:

Human reason has a peculiar fate in one kind of its cognitions: it is troubled by questions that it cannot dismiss, for they are posed to it by the nature of reason itself, but that it also cannot answer, because they surpass human reason's every ability. (*CPR* A, vii)

In what follows, I will not be talking about *Schranken* and will render *Grenze* as "limit."

19. This makes them what Kant calls "conjectural," a complexity which I will ignore here; see Kant, "Conjectural Beginning of Human History," *AA*, 8:107–123.

20. Kant, *Prolegomena*, *AA*, 4:318–319; see also *CPR*, *AA*, 5:81.

21. For two of the most insightful such accounts, see Beiser 1987 and Pinkard 2002.

## CHAPTER 1

1. An example of the kind of trouble this can lead to is discussed by Robert Brandom (2002, 188–189). As Brandom points out, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*'s transition from consciousness to self-consciousness relies on taking the similarity of consciousness and its object to constitute their identity and/or on preserving the priority of consciousness over its object. Both these features will be subjected to critical scrutiny later in the book (see also McCumber 1989, 60–62). The argument here is thus not Hegel's final view. In fact, it is *designed* to fail.

2. This quote is often used even by writers who themselves are not concerned to establish a theological reading of Hegel: see Burbidge 1981, 214; Forster 1989, 97, 121; Harris 1983, 10; Rohs 1978, 43; Rosen 1982, 69; and Taylor 1977, 490 (where it is rightly stated to concern God as an “abstraction”). Pierre-Jean Labarrière (1986, esp. 298–301) locates it as representational, that is, nonspeculative and nonphilosophical; Robert Pippin (1989, 177) quotes it, with distaste; and Vittorio Hösle (1987, 67), with distance.

3. Spinoza, *De Intellectus Emendatione*, in Spinoza 1925, 27 (English translation: Spinoza 1985, 31–32).

4. See Schmueli 1972, 654–655.

5. For an account of the *Pantheismusstreit*, see Beiser 1987, 44–91.

6. For an account of the *Atheismusstreit*, or atheism controversy, see Daniel Breazeale’s introduction to Fichte 1988, 40–43.

7. This was Greek slang for using oars; Plato, *Phaedo* 99d.

8. See Gadamer 1989, 305.

9. For a vigorous summary of views of this kind, see Frederick C. Beiser’s introduction to Beiser 1993, 1–24. Beiser ends his account of Hegel by claiming that the dialectics of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* shows that Hegel had taken Kant’s criticism of metaphysics seriously, but he does not tell us how that dialectics is supposed to work to restore metaphysics or how it functions in the later writings.

10. Among Hegel’s students in Berlin and their successors, the Old Hegelians and the Young Hegelians, this was the dominant interpretation. While Old Hegelians such as Marheineke approved of Hegel so understood, Young Hegelians such as Feuerbach and Marx excoriated him for it; see Löwith 1962.

11. Henrich, introduction to Hegel 1983a, 34; my translation and emphasis.

12. See the bibliography by Joseph Flay in O’Malley, Algozin, and Weiss 1974, 194–236; the intervening decades have only added to it.

13. For examples of this tactic, see also Ameriks 2000, 296, 331–335; Geiger 2007; Guyer 1993, esp. 206 n.2; Horstmann 1999, esp. 574; O’Hagan 1987; Tüschling 1992; and Wood 1989. William F. Bristow identifies such a strategy in Robert Pippin’s account of Hegel at Bristow 2007, 170 n.1.

14. Charles Taylor (1979, 80–81) has influentially tried to argue that Hegel is doing just that by invoking his “cosmic idea” to show how he thinks that Kantian abstraction, already rendered suspect by common sense, can be filled in by appeal to a concrete, spiritual moral order. In addition to attributing to Hegel a Schellingian approach (against which see below in this chapter), this leads to serious violations of the plausibility constraint. My own account of how Kantian abstraction is overcome without such implausible appeals must wait until Chapters 4 and 5.

15. Pinkard 2000, 256–258. Hegel’s break with Schelling is also documented at Westphal 2000, 290–291 n.42, 300–301; see also Mure 1940, 58. For an extended account of Hegel’s movement beyond his Schellingian period to the *Phenomenology*, see Bristow 2007, 169–203.

16. For Hegel’s relation to Hamann, see Anderson 2008 and McCumber 1993, 7–10, 290–296.



17. Those adopting the view that Hegel took a theological/metaphysical turn after the *Phenomenology* either ignore Hegel's earlier metaphysical Schellingianism or perhaps think that the *Phenomenology* represents a mere proto-Marxist interlude in Hegel's overall metaphysical development. Among the famous names attributing such a turn to Hegel after the *Phenomenology* is Jürgen Habermas (1988b); it also animates Habermas 1987. See also Honneth 1996; Höslé 1987; Hyppolite 1997; Kojève 1968; Theunissen 1982; and Williams 1997, 4–19.

18. For a comprehensive introduction to this approach, see the essays in Engelhardt and Pinkard 1994; Engelhardt's introduction (1–18) is particularly accessible.

19. Similarly, Frederick Beiser, who strongly advocates the “metaphysical” view of Hegel, claims that the central problem Hegel faced was how to legitimate metaphysics in the face of the Kantian critique of knowledge; see his introduction to Beiser 1993, 20.

20. Hegel's views on the relation of knowledge to reality are anything but a set of “suppositions”; that relation is ultimately the question of the nature of philosophical comprehension itself and is an underlying theme of almost every page of Hegel's mature writings.

21. Ameriks 2000, 300; see also *ibid.*, 276; Herman, introduction to Rawls 2000, xv.

22. Fichte claims that Kant's incomprehensibility was the impetus for his own philosophical work; see the prefatory note to the *Wissenschaftslehre* at Fichte 1834–1846, 1:420–421.

23. In general, however, Horstmann agrees with Henrich that Hegel is to be understood mainly in terms of developments within German philosophy; see Horstmann 1999, 569.

24. “. . . in der Kontinuität der von Kant ausgehenden Bewegung”; Henrich 1983a, 15.

25. Wood stresses the importance of Aristotle and the Greeks throughout *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (1990): “Hegel's ethical thought turns out to represent a rather Aristotelian variety of ethical naturalism” (12; see also 9, 14, 55–57, 214–215, etc.).

26. As Graham Bird (1987, 72) puts it, it is “the whole apparatus of a *a priori* truth which sustains the idea of a distinctive transcendental philosophy.”

27. Pippin's remark here also applies to Stephen Houlgate's (2006) more recent reading of Hegel. While it may be plausible to claim, as Houlgate does (52, 65), that later moments such as essence, judgment, and syllogism are “immanent” in the empty moment of being from which Hegel's logic starts, what are we to say in the case of still later moments such as photosynthesis (9:411–412/336) and vendetta (for which see Chapter 4)?

28. See Petry's explanatory notes in Hegel 1970 *passim*.

29. The “nothing” (*Nichts*) is unsurprising because what it expresses is that no terms are available with which to define “being.” Nothing is thus the outcome of the first philosophical word, and Hegel's system throughout exemplifies Sophocles' comment on human existence in general: “pantoporos aporos ep' ouden erchetai” (journeying everywhere yet without passage, he comes upon nothing; *Antigone*, line 359).

30. The “metaphysical deduction” of the categories in the *Critique of Pure Reason* presupposes the existence of the forms of judgment; *CPR* B, 159.

31. Hegel's kind of “verified” definition makes use only of terms he himself has al-

ready defined, and his definition of “part” does not come until page 514 of the English translation of the *Science of Logic* (Hegel 1976): parts are “the immediate existence which was the world of appearance.” I will not attempt to gloss this here, since many of the preceding pages play into it, but we can see how strange are the thickets into which Hegel’s definitional procedure can lead him. Michael J. Inwood (1983, 186–188) discusses Hegel’s dismissal of substrates and the consequent dismissal of propositional form but views him as analyzing propositions generally, not talking (as he clearly is in § 85) about philosophy. Inwood therefore believes that Hegel thinks that all propositions have definite subject terms and that he is refuted by the existence of propositions which do not, such as “it is raining.” But for Hegel, that sort of “it” is precisely the kind of “hovering substrate” he wants to ban. It is unclear, to me at least, whether Houlgate (2006) avoids such a substrate: “Thought [for Hegel] is minimally the awareness or intuition of being itself” (130). Is an “intuition of being itself” an improvement on “thinking about something”?

32. Brandom (2002, 188), who is more interested in Hegel’s positions than his practice, denies it to Hegel altogether.

33. For Hegelian immanence claims, see the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 3:28/14, 46/27, 588/490–491; the *Science of Logic*, 5:19/31, 44/50, 57/60, 67–68/69; 6:264/592; and the *Encyclopedia Logic*, 8:14–15/5, 57/35–36 (*Enz.* § 12 *Anm.*), 307/236–237 (*Enz.* § 160 *Zus.*), 368/286–287 (*Enz.* § 213 *Anm.*).

34. Also avoided is what Guyer (1993) identifies as the basic problem in Hegel’s treatment of Kant’s theoretical philosophy: that Hegel “simply wants to buy Kant’s claims to a priori knowledge without paying the high cost that Kant thought had to be charged for this” (172–173), namely grounding them in the subject. Guyer finds that view in the early *Faith and Knowledge* and generalizes it to some of the later writings (178–183). For Hegelian suspicions about assuming that thought is necessary and universal, the key marks of the Kantian a priori, see *Enz.* § 40 and *Anm.*

35. Inner identity for Hegel is identity that is not (yet) evident; “the morning star is the evening star” is thus a necessary statement, because only when the two phrases are fully understood do we see that they designate the same thing. On this view of “necessity,” see Stekeler-Weithofer 1993, 195; see also Hegel’s *Encyclopedia Logic* at 8:302–303/232–233 (*Enz.* §§ 157–158). On how it contrasts with freedom, see Dudley 2002, 17–18.

36. As Hegel puts it in a passage to which Stern (2008, 171 n.94) calls attention, “in order that [philosophy] may come into existence, there must be progression from the individual and particular to the universal—an activity which is . . . a reaction to the empirical stuff, a reworking of it. (The demand of a priori knowledge, which seems to imply that the Idea should construct [entirely] from itself is [itself] a reconstruction)” (20:79; my translation). See again Hegel’s claims that universality and necessity should not be *presupposed* as characteristics of thought, as they are (he says) by both Kant and Hume, at *Enz.* § 40 and *Anm.*

37. As at preface to *PhR*, 16–18/21–22.

38. See Henrich, introduction to Hegel 1983c, 34, quoted previously.

39. For Trendelenburg’s reaction to Hegel’s approach to logic, see Schmidt 1977, 93–98; Kierkegaard 1980, 12–13.

40. See also Kant, *CPR* B, 79–82.
41. “Die schon zubereitete Erkenntnis” (8:17/6); see also 8:57–58/37.
42. Houlgate (2006, 32–35) and Maker (1994, 99–100) agree.
43. Houlgate’s (2006, 34) criticism of Michael Forster (1993) is thus apt: “Forster is quite right to note how Hegel’s analysis of becoming does not proceed in exact accordance with the method that Forster sets up. But he is quite wrong to believe that that matters.”
44. Wood 1990, 2. Ardis Collins, with whose work on Hegel’s criticism of Kant this book has deep agreements, identifies Hegelian philosophical procedure with a “retreat into ground” according to which (1) each concept is “proven” to be necessarily connected with its opposite and (2) a new concept is “derived” which explains that necessary connection (2001, 23); the affinities with Wood’s view (and that of many others) are evident. On my view, this necessity does not reside in concepts which preexist Hegel’s logic but is created by it as a “necessity” by definition: once a term has been defined, it *must* mean what it does. That is its “inner identity” with the previous terms that define it; and, as we saw, inner identity is for Hegel necessity. Hegel’s system is thus much looser and more flexible than many people think. Houlgate (2006, 32) argues that such a method cannot be presupposed at the outset by Hegel’s philosophy, which I take it would mean that it cannot govern what appears in that philosophy prior to its own appearance and thus cannot be the “method” of the whole; see also McCumber 1993, 163.
45. For this question, see Popper 1940; for two of the many refutations of Popper’s point of view, see Hannah 1996 and McCumber 1993, 159–163.
46. The problem for this is keeping the “failure” of the *Logic* from infecting the more concrete works. Not only do we have the psychological problem of accounting for how someone astute enough to write works such as the *Philosophy of Right* could be crazy enough to have written the *Logic*, but also Hegel never says that the *Philosophy of Right* (for example) follows a different method from the *Logic*; indeed, he recurrently speaks as if there were a single “philosophical” method; see *PhR* § 2.
47. Even at 6:562/835, which is perhaps as close as he comes, Hegel treats contradiction only as a subordinate moment of the whole.
48. This does not mean that there are no constraints at all, for changing a single term may require changing a lot of other terms; but it is in principle always possible. Note that the resolution of contradictions plays no crucial role in this; the movement forward is impelled merely by the need to have meanings for words. It is noteworthy that Wood’s main example of the Hegelian resolution of a contradiction, Kant’s second antinomy, occurs in one of Hegel’s “Remarks” and so is not part of the onward dialectic: 5:216–227/190–199.
49. The contortions are not alleviated by the fact that the same term may occur in different parts of the definition without circularity, though the definiendum itself cannot occur anywhere in the overall definiens. Thus, when Hegel defines “quantum” to be “quantity as a determinate being and a something” (*die Quantität als ein Dasein und Etwas*; 5:230/201), it is possible for an earlier term like “becoming” to show up in the definitions of both “determinate being” and “something.” Only if “quantity” itself

showed up earlier would the definition be circular. The absence of circularity results from the fact that the term in a definiens is not itself being defined but is being used to define; and there is no reason why a term, once defined, cannot be reused in this way. If the definiens itself were to show up somewhere among the various levels of definienses, however, we would indeed have circularity.

50. What pulls the development along from its first beginning is not in general the presence of contradictions but simply that more definitions are needed at each stage if we are going to have the terms we need to understand the world around us—if we are going to have an adequately systematic philosophy. Klaus Hartmann (1984) has suggested this.

51. Hence, Hegel is free to use Kantian arguments, immediately derived from his own account of Kantian moral theory in “Morality,” to criticize slavery. Ameriks (2000) notes this but goes on to say that this move “comes at the price of relying on what seem to be the very abstract principles [Hegel] meant to transcend” (314). On a definitionalist understanding of “transcend,” the reliance is entirely legitimate.

## CHAPTER 2

1. This is supported by Paul Guyer (1993), who, however, goes on (as do many other writers) to provide the statements and defenses he believes Kant *could* have provided had he been more careful. This is a step Hegel never takes.

2. CPR B, 833; see also the treatment in the Jäsche *Logic*, AA, 9:25.

3. Like Hegel. I will remain indifferent as to whether phenomena and noumena constitute two worlds or two aspects of one world; for an introduction to the controversies, see Allison 2004 and Prauss 1974.

4. Thus, as W. H. Walsh (1987, 123) points out, it is knowledge of external noumena in the positive sense which would require intellectual intuition; see CPR B, 307.

5. Adorno 2001, 31; see also Bristow 2007, 96.

6. When Guyer (1993, 186) writes that “in most cases, Kant’s procedure is to begin with certain apparently indisputable claims to knowledge, make inferences to the cognitive capacities necessary to explain such claims, and only then make further determinations about the inevitable limitations of such cognitive capacities,” he is defending Kant against this reading of Hegel’s charge by arguing that Kant in fact does what Hegel, apparently, says he should.

7. See, for example, Marx 1964, 176.

8. This passage will be discussed in Chapter 4.

9. Each of these, taken separately, leads to a different reading of Kant’s entire project; see Bristow 2007, 65–66. The issue here is that Hegel maintains *both* of them.

10. See Hegel’s remarks on Humean skepticism at *Enz.* § 39 *Anm.*

11. Hegel thus does not miss the entire transcendental dimension of Kant’s philosophy and claim that Kant is *merely* an empirical psychologist, as Graham Bird (1987, 72–74) claims. Hegel thinks Kant is inconsistently transcendental. His problem is not that he develops his account of the cognitive faculties without regard to actual cases of cognition but that he does the opposite. Guyer’s defense of Kant against Hegel’s putative charge (see note 6) thus opens Kant to the charge that Hegel actually makes.

12. It needs to be pointed out, however, that Hegel does not wholly equate appeals to introspection with appeals to history and science. The latter are, to be sure, lazy (“Kant’s philosophy took the easy way in its finding of the categories” [Enz. § 42 Anm.]); but the former, as we will see in the next chapter, are actually evil. If Hegel thought Kant made introspection the basis of his philosophy, he would presumably have subjected him to the kind of abuse he visits on Bouterwerk, Fries, and Krug, whom as we will see in Chapter 3 he accuses of doing precisely that.

13. In the account of Kant’s procedure referred to in note 6 above, Guyer is claiming that Kant wrote the *Critique of Pure Reason* using the “analytical” method; see also Guyer 1987, 6; Ameriks 2000, 288–289; O’Neill 1989, 15–16, 21, 38; and Bristow 2007, 94–97.

14. Applying Hegel’s criticisms of Kant somewhat indelicately to later debates, I suggest that his view would be that the demand of philosophers such as Husserl and Frege that philosophy avoid psychologism was itself psychological; see Frege 1980 and Husserl 1970, 1–266.

15. Hegel’s remark that “Kant sets to work in a psychological manner,” quoted above, suggests that he is ironically referring to Kant’s statement in the *Prolegomena*, also quoted above, that he “set to work synthetically”; both use the phrase *zu Werke gehen*. Hegel, in other words, must not only know about the passage in the *Prolegomena* (as any halfway serious reader of Kant would) but may actually have that passage in mind when he criticizes Kant’s project.

16. For Aristotle’s view of the formal identity of the sensed object in the world and the sense datum in the soul, see McCumber 1999, 48–56.

17. Thomas Wartenberg (1993, 112–113) has called attention to this aspect of Hegel’s thought about the in-itself, though instead of “futurity” he characterizes the in-itself as what is “implicit” in an experience of a thing—thus taking away the element of possible surprise at the thing’s development and missing the role of the in-itself in providing the thing’s mind-independence.

18. The in-itself within experience is then what Hegel, in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*, calls the “in-itself for consciousness” and locates within consciousness as the “result” at which knowing aims, and which is therefore identified as the “truth” of that stage (3:76–79/53–55)—a usage to which Hegel keeps throughout the book. It is also what he means when he says, in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, that Kant was unable to come “to the in-itself; to the truly objective” (20:351). Hegel is not saying that Kant tried and failed to achieve knowledge of the in-itself, as Graham Bird (1987, 76) claims; rather, he is saying that if the thing in itself were correctly understood by Kant, he would have been able to know it—once it was dead and had no future.

19. For the in-itselfness of a thing as conditioned by its relation to other things, for example, see 3:102–103/98.

20. Those—many—who think that Hegel posits a temporal development which is in any way teleologically governed or, indeed, preordained cannot do so without ignoring the inscrutable futurity of the in-itself for him, or without overlooking the fact that he never uses philosophy to predict—not even to predict, as Derrida (1982, 99) would have it, that all things can be sublated, that a machine can never work.

21. The problems began when intellectual intuition, with Hölderlin's help, escaped from philosophy and ran wild in aesthetic theory and then in art itself; see Tillette 1995, 71–128.

22. A point made with reference to intellectual intuition in the *Critique of Judgment*, AA, 5:406.

23. I thus simplistically take intellectual intuition to be merely the activity of an intuitive understanding; Eckart Förster's (2012, 145) distinction between the two, fascinating and important though it is, is not recognized by Hegel here and so does not play into the current discussion.

24. That this applies to all intellectual intuition is denied by Förster (2012, 144–145), who finds in these passages a kind of intuitive understanding which moves from whole to parts. It must still, apparently, cognize the parts as necessary to the whole, which would mean that it cannot fully cognize the whole without, presumably simultaneously, cognizing the parts. As Förster's work shows, along with that of Tillette (which will be discussed later in this chapter), interpretations of Kant's passages on intellectual intuition have not yet been stabilized. If Förster is right about this type of intuitive understanding, Kant himself anticipates what James Kreines and I see as Hegel's main alteration in the concept of the intuitive understanding (which will also be discussed later in this chapter).

25. Augustine 1912, vol. 2, 13:38; see also Tillette 1995, 14–15.

26. See Harris, introduction to Hegel 1977, 11–15.

27. See also 2:324–328/87–92.

28. For an overall history of that tradition, see Tillette 1995.

29. For an excellent and provocative example of this approach, see Tüschling 1992.

30. For “reason which comes in through the door” (*nous thurathen*), see Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 736b28, 744b22; see also *Metaphysics* 1072b14–1073a13, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1177a15, 21, b30, etc.

31. It is unclear, certainly to me, if on Förster's view intellectual intuition is serial in this sense or if it moves from the intuition of the whole to that of all the parts at once; the considerations in note 26 suggest that it does.

32. Diels and Kranz 1969, 2:38 (Anaxagoras, fragment B12).

33. *Die Empirie*—which, *pace* Kreines (2007, 322), is not the same thing as “reality” for Hegel (for Hegel the real, after all, is rational).

34. Kreines (2007, 323) quotes for this Hegel's statement that for empiricism, “the universal determinations . . . are not supposed to have any more significance and validity on their own account than that which is taken from perception,” which he identifies as coming from § 38 *Anm.*; in fact the quote is from § 39 itself.

35. Xavier Tillette (1995, 220) agrees with Westphal, holding that the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the coup de grâce for intellectual intuition.

36. On such a reading, when we say what a thing is—apply an “essential” predicate to it—we “regard” it “as if” the property so designated were actualizing itself in the thing, as does a natural *telos*. Investigating this view would be crucial to a general Hegelian theory of reference and would also require extensive discussion of Hegel's logical account of “judgment.” For a beginning, see CW, 37–38.

37. Förster (2012, 145) has independently come to similar conclusions.

38. For the use of the important Hegelian term *Entäußerung*, see *Enz.* §§ 462, 463.

39. Harris, introduction to Hegel 1977, 10.

40. Guyer's (1993, 189) claim that Hegel's denunciation of the subjective nature of Kant's categories fails to grapple with Kant's argument that the subjectivism comes from the fact that the categories apply only to intuitions, not to things in themselves, is thus correct but for Hegel is beside the point; the categories for him apply to language and only thence to things. Kant's argument from the application to intuitions to "subjectivism" is thus based on a false premise. Since Hegel's thought determinations, unlike Kantian categories, are definitions, each shows to what empirical objects it applies (for which demand, see Guyer 1993, 192).

### CHAPTER 3

1. On this, see the lucid account of Kant's "subjective idealism" at Westphal 1989, 36–39.

2. There are persistent efforts to find in Hegel's later writings a stable contrast between the German words *ideal* and *ideell*; see the translators' introduction to Hegel 1991, xxiv–xxv. I have been unable to find anything riding on this distinction in the passages I will cite here, and so I will ignore it.

3. See 13:166/123. As the discussion of "positing reflection" in the *Science of Logic* shows us (6:26/401), positing as a return from immediacy for Hegel is conditioned by that immediacy and so is always positing *as* something or other; to posit is not to create or generate but to interpret. This is what we saw Pippin locate as the serious point behind Hegel's "joke" in the *Phenomenology*: that our dependence on something does not count until we have a reason for it to count means that it is "posited" by us.

4. The ontological holism attributed to Hegel by so many, and perhaps most carefully by Kenneth Westphal, thus does not hold for the "pre-inwardized" content of *Empfindung*. That, in Westphal's (1989, 142) formulation, "all parts of the world are fundamentally interrelated, where these interrelations are fundamentally conceptual relations," cannot—in light of this quote, at least—be an accurate view of Hegel's account of mind-independent reality, insofar as such reality is given to us in *Empfindung* (and one wonders how else it would be given). It is, however, an accurate statement about the world Hegel is interested in, the one in which we live. The fact that the passage quoted above occurs in the *Philosophy of Spirit* does not restrict it to human souls, for the deeper contrast Hegel is exploring here is simply that between being asleep and being awake.

5. See *PhR* §§ 47, 48, 52, 59, etc., and Williams 1997, 144–148.

6. I will translate *Nachdenken* as "reflecting" to distinguish it from the far more logically freighted *Reflexion* ("reflection"); see *Enz.* § 115 and 6:35–80/408–443.

7. Hegel's account of inwardization is thus his account of how I can make representations "my own," while his definitional procedure shows how thought moves beyond the kind of abstraction exhibited by the transcendental unity of apperception, both of which remain "mysterious" to Ameriks (2000, 284).

8. On the breadth and basic nature of inwardization for Hegel, see Pinkard 1988, 105, 110 (where, importantly, he refers to it as “idealization”).

9. Hegel at one point, indeed, explicitly compares reflecting to consumption: you cannot think for another person any more than you can eat or drink for him (*Enz.* § 23 *Anm.*)

10. For which see *Analytica posteriora* 2.19; its basic idea is also that of Aristotle’s *De memoria* 1.1.450a27–b14.

11. For more detail, see McCumber 1990.

12. Brandom thus agrees with Hegel that, as he puts it, “the determinateness of the objective world and the structured process of grasping it are reciprocally sense-dependent concepts, each intelligible only in terms of the other.” For this view in Hegel’s earlier works, see Sedgwick 2012, 68.

13. In addition, Hegel says here, this view would deny the possibility of learning, since we learn from our encounters with *external* reality—with, precisely, facts that we do not posit and do not expect.

14. Plato thus does not, for Hegel, have a “two worlds” theory, for the sensible domain for him has no reality; the only world is the world of the ideas. This Neoplatonic reading was rediscovered for modern Plato scholarship by R. E. Allen (1965).

15. In the same way, Taylor’s empiricistic reading of Hegel, which I discussed in Chapter 1 at note 14, makes the “cosmic idea” shoulder the *inkonsequenz* of Hegel’s own system.

16. For more on the distinction between these two claims, see Wartenberg 1993, 104–105.

17. As Robert Stern (2008, 156) puts it, these finite immediate objects “are not related to other finite things, as on the holistic reading, but rather they are related to the infinite,” where (I would add) the “infinite” in question is the inwardizing self. This role for the inwardizing self in establishing ontological interconnectedness then is presumably what Westphal is getting at when he identifies the interrelations among things as “conceptual” (see note 4 above).

18. In this passage, knotty even for the *Phenomenology*, it is syntactically unclear whether the second “it” in the first sentence refers to the “mineness” of consciousness or to consciousness itself. The distinction is for present purposes without a difference, and I merely note it here.

19. On the *Anstoß*, see Fichte 1834–1946, 1:210 (English translation: Fichte 1970, 189); and Seidel 1993, 81–82.

20. *AA*, 12:370–371/254.

21. For example, 20:388, 389, 390, 392, 401, 405, 407, 408, 409, 413.

22. In the 1801 *Difference between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy*, Hegel gleefully estimated that each citizen of Fichte’s state will require at least half a dozen authorities to watch him at all times—and each of them, of course, will require another half dozen (2:86n/148n).

23. For more on Hegel’s response to philosophy founded on “facts of consciousness,” see McCumber 1991.



24. For an account of Fries's thought, see Pinkard 2002, 199–211.
25. The incident is excerpted at 7:519–521.
26. See esp. 2:195 (English translation, Hegel 2002, 233).
27. That is why Hegel's logic coincides, he says, with metaphysics (5:45/51, 61/63; *Enz.* § 9 *Anm.*).
28. See *CW*, 220–229. For the issues involved in Greek color terms, see Maxwell-Stuart 1981.
29. The role of the community in determining meaning, but not its generation through language, is explored at Brandom 2002, 222–226.
30. Gorgias, fragment B4:84, at Diels and Kranz 1969, 2:282.
31. Hegel's view is hardly new with him; as Heidegger (1978) points out, the ancient words for “thing,” *pragma* and *res*, as well as the ancient Germanic words *thing* and *dinc*, all refer to beings which affect us in some way.
32. See Pinkard 1988, 38, for an excellent account of this, along with Pippin 1989, 198–199, and Stern 2008, 157.
33. On this, see Wallace 2005, 77–78.
34. For a concise statement of skepticism as a challenge to Hegel, see Stern 2008, 137.

#### CHAPTER 4

1. Hegel's references to “formal universality” and abstraction here associate this approach with his general view of Kant.
2. On this sense of necessity, see the discussion in Chapter 1 and Dudley 2002, 17–18.
3. Stekeler-Weithofer (1993, 199–200) sees the importance of the fact that Hegel derives the concept of the will from something else but takes him to derive it not from his own system but from the nature of speech acts. On the current reading, the nature of speech acts provides the general schema for understanding anything philosophical; the derivation of will is one case of this.
4. On Hegel's logical account of will, see McCumber 1986 and Moyer 2011, 28–33. For a comparison of will and intelligence, see Inwood 1983: 370–371; and for their relation, see Pippin 2008, 129–133. On the naturalistic implications of this, see Pinkard 2012, 30–33.
5. That Hegel defines the will in terms of the intelligence means that he does not regard it as somehow being “bootstrapped,” to use Barbara Herman's (2007a) term, exclusively out of desires. For an example of such bootstrapping of will from desires, Herman points to Williams 1971. Though Herman does not note it, Williams is following Hobbes in that he makes will merely the winning desire: see Hobbes 1991, 28; and McCumber 1999, 135–139. That will is developed in part from a cognitive capacity, rather than from strictly practical faculties such as desire, reflects Hegel's view that the division between theoretical and practical mind is not absolute. Even the contents of theoretical mind are produced, and such production is a practical activity: see note 11 below.
6. As a comparison of Hegel's “Psychology” (*Enz.* §§ 440–482) with Aristotle's *De anima* shows.
7. There is, to be sure, a question as to whether we can ever attain such a perfectly empty concept or, as with Kant's idea of the “unconditioned,” can only merely approxi-

mate it (CPR B, 443–444). If the latter, there will always be constraints on my choices in the form of characteristics of my self that I cannot abstract away. Heidegger (1963a) has argued cogently against such perfect emptiness in the case of Hegel’s logical account of being. Hegel, presumably, would dismiss the question as psychologistic: he is defining freedom of the will, not telling us to what extent we actually exemplify it. His claim would then be that we can come close enough to such a perfectly empty concept for, so to speak, government work.

8. See Wood 1990, 150.

9. André Stanguennec (1985, 191–192) has pointed out that this duality in the will between empty and concrete determinations reproduces the structure of desiring consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which a perfectly empty ego (“I = I”) confronts, and seeks to unite with, a determinate object. The *Philosophy of Right*’s version of this structure is that of the appropriation of property in “Abstract Right”: I take something to be mine because I desire it. Stanguennec then goes on to assert that Hegel’s concept of freedom is founded on the “phenomenological experience” of recognition, that is, interpersonally. The *Phenomenology*’s account of desire, however, precedes that of recognition. If will is founded on desire as Stanguennec suggests, then for Hegel as for Kant the moral will is not a phenomenon of intersubjectivity, which does not yet exist when desire is introduced. This is shown at *PhR* §§ 36, 48 and *Anm.*, and 56, where other persons arrive in virtue of my property in my body and thus presuppose the moral will. Because other people arrive at the stage of “Abstract Right,” where individuals are indistinguishable from one another, Hegel also agrees with Kant on the other great principle of modern social theory, that the person responsible for the laws is subject to them; see O’Hagan 1987, 142.

10. For discussions of “remaining with itself,” see Hardimon 1994, 114; and Wood 1990, 45–47.

11. This means, as Pippin (1993, 539) has noted, that Hegel takes the view that “any self-conscious agent, simply in attempting to satisfy desires, would be committed to some rationality principle.”

12. Somewhat paradoxically, Wood (1989, 47) maintains that Hegel was so committed to freedom of the will that he did not discuss psychological antecedents at all, thus leaving him open to compatibilist readings. Quante (2004, 177–185) leaves Hegel’s omission of how actions are caused unexplained and fills in the lacuna. I suggest, by contrast, that Hegel’s ability to avoid taking a position on freedom of the will is a merit of his account.

13. This holds for freedom of the will generally, which, as Richard Dien Winfield (1988, 84) argues, cannot provide freedom in the fullest sense. For an account of the limitations Hegel sees in freedom of the will, see McCumber 1989, 87–98. In true freedom, the will would have to generate the alternatives from which it is to choose, for which see Dudley 2002, 69–100. An example of such a choice, on a definitionalist reading, would be the philosopher choosing which among previously generated terms will be included in the next definition.

14. See Ameriks 2000, 303–306. Ameriks never refers to Hegel’s own famous definition of freedom as inner necessity, though elsewhere he aptly characterizes it as “reflective agreement with the dialectical path of reason and spirit” (313).

15. That Kant did not produce such a theory will be one of Hegel's main points against him. See Wood 1990, 44–45; on Hegel's account of action, see Kervegan 1996, 51–55.

16. Since a goal can be a one-time thing—my goal right now may be so unique that it can never be repeated—it is not a norm. Pippin (1995) is thus not exact when he says that Hegel “clearly considers it a condition on some event being an action that it is norm governed” (104). As Pippin points out, norm governedness is not directly a characteristic of actions but follows from the fact that “I pursue an end for a reason, a reason I take to have justifying force” (122). But in fact we do not always pursue ends for reasons, as witness Captain Ahab. In general, as Ido Geiger (2007) has shown, Hegel is more interested in where norms come from—the “founding act” of a new age—than in how they govern.

17. As we will see, that content can only be supplied, let alone validated, by a community.

18. Friedman 1986, 518. See also Steinberger 1985, 150; and most notably, Herman 1993a.

19. Terry Pinkard (1988, 114–115) glosses drives as “dispositions of character that motivate us to act in some ways but not in others” and accuses Hegel of using the term (which he translates as “impulse”) misleadingly; a drive for Pinkard is no mere impulse but “an intelligent disposition of character involving reason.” But Hegel is, though perhaps quite wrong, not so misleading. Drives are not, in the first instance, dispositions of character but explicitly raw natural impulses; even at *Enz.* § 473 *Zus.*, which is their first appearance in what the *Encyclopedia* calls “practical spirit,” they are not associated with reason but only with “willing intelligence.” The abstracting power of intelligence is invoked here in order to contrast drives with desires: while a desire is for a particular object here and now, a drive is more stable and universal, and that is what associates it, for Hegel, with the intelligence. My hunger for a sandwich is thus a desire, but hunger itself is a drive. Animals have drives, such as the *Bildungstrieb* or *Kunsttrieb*, which leads bees to build hives and beavers to build dams (*Enz.* § 365 *Zus.*), and, of course, the sexual drive (§ 369 [§ 368 in the English translation, where *Trieb* is—misleadingly—translated as “urge”]).

20. The purification of the drives, which Wood calls “self-actualization,” is thus—for all its importance—not, as Wood's wording suggests (1990, 31), the ultimate “starting point” of Hegel's ethics but is derived within the system.

21. Thompson gives a lucid account of what such ordering involves, though he does not specify its objects as drives. As Sally Sedgwick (2000a, 318) points out, we (humans, Hegel would specify) have no drives which are not ordered in this way.

22. As we are about to see, the drives are not “overcome” in that they are left behind in or excluded from morality but in that they are “purified” in the senses just given.

23. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1076a3, quoting *Iliad* 2.204.

24. See also *PhR* §§ 21 and *Anm.*, 22, 27; and Wood 1990, 43. Of course, the will willing itself is necessary for it to will anything else—so no matter what concrete goals and desires are in play at a given time, we are always willing to will. The will willing itself is

thus ipso facto a motivation, and a universal one: Hegelian autonomy is its own motivation. See also Pippin 1995, 114.

25. The moral law is thus not for Hegel, as it is for Herman (2007b, 21), “dispersed” into various universalistic maxims.

26. See the lucid account of this at Rawls 2000, 340–343.

27. In discussing Hegel’s thesis of the “nullity” of crime, a thesis which Wood (1990, 109–117) finds to be “shrouded in obscure metaphors,” Robert Williams (1997, 174) locates it in two contradictions implicit in any crime as such: that it violates freedom in general, the basic principle of the will; and that it “cancels the [specific] freedom of the victim and thereby cancels its own.”

28. Wood (1990, 101, 109) sees the problem here not as the conflicts of the drives with each other but as the abstractness of abstract right. He then sees the problem as resolved by the state, not by morality. On the present reading, the abstractness of abstract right is merely what keeps the more basic problem of mutually conflicting drives from finding a solution, and it is morality which begins the solving, which is finally achieved in the state. On the conflict of the drives, see Collins 2001, 26; and Stanguennec 1985, 195.

29. Or trying to: Williams 1997, 180.

30. Note that, in accordance with my claims in Chapter 2, the will “in itself” is thus the *future* of the will “for itself.”

31. Even though, as Wood (1990, 31) notes, Hegel will refrain from specifying a rational content for this goal—that is, from specifying an overall human goal—until §§ 134–135, Hegel’s indebtedness to Aristotle’s concept of *eudaimonia* is evident here.

32. If we apply to this the utterance model which I earlier called Hegel’s basic schema, we see that he is making here the same point that he makes about language in the *Philosophy of Spirit*: “What is ineffable is, in truth, only something obscure, fermenting, something which gains clarity only when it is able to put itself into words” (Enz. § 462 Zus.).

33. As Collins (2001, 27) notes.

34. Or, as Hegel puts it in the *Lectures* of 1819/20, which “manifest the nature of the action” (Hegel 1983c, 94): see Wood 1990, 140–142; and, of course, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1110b18–1111a21. Reading Hegel’s passage against its Aristotelian background dispels Ilting’s claim (at Hegel 1983b, 304 n.125) that Hegel does not allow for negligence.

35. For Hegel’s logical account of presupposition, see 6:28–30/402–404.

36. In Terry Pinkard’s (1988, 132–133) illuminating example, I can purposefully jump out the window in order to fly, but I cannot intentionally do so. A purpose is a purpose no matter how demented, but not so an intention.

37. As Wood (1990, 149) puts it, my good intention is my belief that “the description ‘furthers the good’ applies to my action.”

38. Any action can claim moral validity here, so such validity is not Kantian. It is merely a claim that my action has validity according to *some* definition of morality: see Winfield 1989, 145.

39. See Quante 2004, 125–128. As Wood (1990, 138) puts it, “the nature of my action often involves the complex external circumstances in which I act.” Wood identifies

the precariousness but again focuses on the emptiness of the moral law rather than the complex circumstances of an act (160–161). Herman (1993a, 220–221) suggests that we can generate for Kant a “tiered set of maxims,” moving from the concrete to the more general, which is then what the movement from purpose to intention would track. We will see how this works in Chapter 5.

40. Hoy 1989, 215; see also Quante 2004, 94.

41. See Pippin 2008, 153–155; and Williams 1997, 204.

42. Hoy 1989, 215–216; see also Walsh 1969, 15–18, 25. My right to have the morality of a practice or institution explained to me is as close as Hegel comes in the *Philosophy of Right* to the idea, attributed to him by Pippin (1995, 105), that norms must be self-imposed. As we will see, what imposes them is in fact the state (see *PhR* § 132). This imposition means that the state has an oppressive side which is little recognized in most accounts of his political philosophy; see McCumber 1984.

43. Collins is not here using “person” in Hegel’s technical sense.

44. Dieter Henrich (*Einführung* to Hegel 1983c, 32) claims that Hegel is a “strong institutionalist in that [the individual] has no rights against the institutions of her society.” Henrich derives this not from Hegel’s texts but from Hegel’s putative Schellingianism, according to which, as we saw in Chapter 1, “the world is only the self-explication of logical form” (34). But Hegel was not a lifelong Schellingian, as I argued there, and *PhR* §§ 138–140 show that he was in fact what Henrich calls a “moderate institutionalist” (32–34). In addition to the discussion of insight here, see the discussion of the “right of necessity” at *PhR* §§ 127–128; see also *RPh* §§ 138–140 and McCumber 1986. W. H. Walsh (1969, 55) makes the same mistake as Henrich.

45. See, for example, the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, AA, 4:393–399, 415–419; *Critique of Practical Reason*, AA, 5:24–26; *Critique of Judgment*, AA, 5:430; etc.

46. Thompson (2001, 52) takes them to be synonymous. Welfare, if it involves the happiness of all, is a more reflective version of happiness.

47. For Hegel’s logical account of relation as such (which in the *Science of Logic* is dispersed into various sections), see *Enz.* §§ 135–141.

48. Robert Williams (1997, 195, 202) considers the difference between insight and true conscience as being that between “formal” and genuine conscience.

49. As Friedman points out, in the *Phenomenology* hypocrisy enters for Hegel when the Kantian must publicly declare the three postulates of practical reason—immortality, freedom, and the existence of God—even though she knows she cannot accept them theoretically. It is thus the disjunction between the demands of practical reason (as Hegel understands them) and of theoretical reason which leads to hypocrisy. For Friedman (1986), Hegel solves this disjunction by extending the reach of theoretical reason into the noumenal realm—a solution which he thinks “ends in hybris, in intellectual arrogance” (522). I have argued in Chapter 2 that this is not how Hegel handles the disjunction; his solution is rather, as Hoy and Walsh claim, to extend morality into the social realm.

50. *PhR* § 138; Hegel 1983b, 246. See also Williams 1997, 202.

51. It is thus true but misleading to say, as Wood (1990, 158) does, that “Hegel’s theory of ethical life derives our ethical duties from social relationships and institutions.”

That is indeed the case, but it gives the impression that ethical life is somehow self-contained and separate from the rest of the system in which it appears. This holds for Kant's moral theory but not for that of Hegel; we have seen that relationships and institutions are themselves derived from drives, and so from nature itself, by the process of purification. Williams (1997, 194, 202) sees it as unfortunate that "Ethical Life" contains no account of genuine conscience. The whole section, in fact, is such an account.

52. Or, as Pinkard (1988, 131) puts it, by "generating" such content.

53. As produced by the vagaries of history, this content of itself makes no normative claims (*PhR* § 3). Hence, Christine Korsgaard (1996c, 65) is wrong to claim that Hegel thinks we should gain content for the moral law by importing normative content from elsewhere; the imported content becomes normative, that is, gains a moral claim on our conduct, only when the individual sees that it expresses the moral law. As we will see subsequently, the individual then "posits [it] in [herself]." The relevant importation, to be sure, is from elsewhere in Hegel's system, not from society itself.

54. This positivity, in Hegelian language, is what entitles the complex of duties in a society to be called "substance" (*PhR* § 144); see 6:219/555. Thompson (2001, 52), though he treats in detail the question of why right (*das Recht*) must (as Hegel says in § 3 *Anm.*) "become positive" (which it finally does at *PhR* §§ 211–214 and 216 *Anm.*), here uses the term as if it meant merely "determinate."

55. This is why, in Pippin's (2008, 141) words, relations to others for Hegel "are understood, not as qualifications or limitations on the subject, but as aspects of its actualization."

56. For a more detailed treatment, see 6:549–551/661–663.

57. Hegel, preface to *RPh*, 17–18/23; see also Walsh 1969, 6–7.

58. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1103b26–28; *Metaphysics* 1029b5–8.

59. For Hegel, however, as we have seen, moral action is "free" not because it is undetermined by natural causes but because it is chosen by someone who is capable of willing her own will.

60. See also *Enz.* § 213 and *Zus.*

61. Walsh 1969, 21, 55; see also Shelton 2000 and Donagan 1977, 12–17. Moral relativism can be argued to follow from the "strong institutionalism" that Dieter Henrich imputes to Hegel, for which see note 44 above.

62. See also the remarks on the division of Christianity into Catholic and Protestant at *PhR* § 270 *Zus.* Neither Catholicism nor Protestantism can alone supply the basic moral principles of the modern state.

63. As Rawls (2000, 340) puts it: for Hegel, "a system of rights is to be justified in virtue of its making actual the concept of a free will that has itself for its object." Hegel in fact endorses, with two changes, what Rawls calls the "CI procedure" (333). The changes are, first, that what is evaluated as to whether or not it makes moral agency actual is not an individual's maxims but, as we have seen, the practices or customs of a community; and second, the question is not whether an action comes under or follows from the categorical imperative but whether it enhances or follows from the ability to act in accordance with it.

64. Though I will not pursue the matter here, such a discussion can shed light on more than merely Hegel's view of the family, for as Merold Westphal (1984) has argued, Hegel's account of the ethical significance of marriage parallels that of the state itself.

65. See Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption* 731b24–732a2.

66. *hē tēs opseōs hēdonē*; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1167a4. On marriage and sexual desire, see Westphal 1984, 85.

67. Hegel 1983a, 231; quoted at Williams 1997, 210.

68. Robert Williams (1997, 211) contrasts this to the break with nature implicit in “morality’s” version of autonomy.

69. See Williams (1997, 214). Winfield (1988, 188), going beyond Hegel, argues that monogamy isn't necessary as long as all member of the marriage “have the same prerogatives and responsibilities.” Hegel's point against this is that being the sole male, or female, in a polygamous marriage necessarily brings prerogatives and responsibilities beyond those of the other members. Whether Hegel would countenance polygamous marriages containing equal numbers of wives and husbands is, happily, beyond my scope here.

70. From Hegel's 1824/25 lectures on the *Philosophy of Right*, quoted at Williams 1997, 224.

71. Hegel also objects, then, that polygamy destroys the symmetry of the relationship. He does mention “Platonic” love in general, at Hegel 1983c, 97; and Hegel 1983b, 132.

72. Hegel does not go into the question of whether a marriage which remains sexually passionate should also be dissolved.

73. In the *Phenomenology's* famous discussion of *Antigone* (3:328–342/267–278), these roles are husband/wife, mother/father, son/daughter, and sister/brother. In the *Lectures* of 1819/20 (Hegel 1983b, 140), Hegel also points out that the gift of oneself to one's spouse cannot be totally free if the two are related by blood, for then it merely confirms an already-shared identity.

74. See <http://www.al-islam.org/al-serat/muta> (accessed April 24, 2013).

75. This is yet another text of Hegel's which goes against Henrich's claim that he is a “strong institutionalist.”

## CHAPTER 5

1. When, for example, Hegel criticizes Kant for his inability to provide an “immanent theory of duties” (§ 135 *Anm.*), what he has in mind is the kind of “theory” he himself intends to produce.

2. On Kant's different formulation of the nature of the will, see Eisler 1994, 606–607.

3. A “mediate” inference for Kant is an inference which contains another inference. When I argue, on the grounds that all humans are mortal, that some mortals are human, my inference is immediate; but arguing that all scholars are mortal requires me to prove the sub-inference that all scholars are human (*CPR* B, 360).

4. Its status as a “proof” of the actuality of freedom is explored by Paul Guyer in the introduction to Guyer 1992, 18–19.

5. Later in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, its “command” (AA, 6:216).

6. See this passage from the *Prolegomena*, quoted in the Introduction: “But how this peculiar property of our sensibility itself is possible, or that of our understanding and of the apperception which is necessarily its basis and that of all thinking, cannot be further analyzed or answered, because it is of them that we are in need for all our answers and for all our thinking about objects” (AA, 4:318–319).

7. With this, Kant concludes what for Sedgwick (1988b, 75–79) identifies as one of the tasks of moral philosophy—establishing the supreme principle of morality. Within the context of this task, the moral law is indeed—as we will see Hegel claim—empty. Kant’s subsequent discussion of the moral law’s application to maxims, and thence to actions, will depend on the construction of the empirical concept of humanity, which Hegel will say is illegitimately brought in from outside. The illegitimacy does not lie in its being relative to the context of application, however, but in its developing an “immanent theory of duties” (*PhR* § 135 *Anm.*). See also Wood 1989, 473.

8. See Hamann 1967. Christine Korsgaard (1996a) has preserved this non-natural element in Kant’s moral theory in spite of her rejection of the “two worlds” reading of Kant in favor of a “two standpoint” view: “Choice is our plight, our inescapable fate, as rational beings. . . . Since we are looking for laws for the employment of our powers of choice and action, *we do not, in this investigation, regard ourselves as natural, causally determined beings*—as the objects of scientific understanding. We regard ourselves as free beings, as the authors of our actions” (xi; emphasis added). Having established the will in a non-natural realm, Kant then goes on to construct ideals for society and history—such as “perpetual peace.” Hegel cannot do this: see Shelton 2000. Of course, as Hoy (1989, 212–213) points out, Kant’s ideals are not very “ideal” in that they make no place for diversity. We will return to this issue.

9. For the general account of how the intelligence produces words, see 10:262–277/206–218. For a general account of Hegel and Hamann, see Anderson 2008 and CW, 290–295.

10. In addition to the contemporary examples cited in the text, Robert Wallace (2005, 17) discusses Nietzsche’s and Schopenhauer’s views on the issue.

11. See also *CPrR*, AA, 5:72, 161; *CPR* B, 561–562; and *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, AA, 4:398.

12. See *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, AA, 4:393–399, 415–419; *CPrR*, AA, 5:24–26; and *Critique of Judgment*, AA, 5:430.

13. For a list of passages, see Ameriks 2000, 324 n.47.

14. On the obscurity of the purification of drives in Kant, see Pippin 1993.

15. The centrality of the purification of the drives to any attempt to bring Aristotle into a Kantian framework is illustrated by Barbara Herman. As she notes, this means abandoning the “rigid oppositional model” of the relation of reason and desire often attributed to Kant and showing how our “system of desires is itself reason-responsive” (2007b, 13). The question then arises as to how we can act both morally and from desire; and this immediately means showing how desires (or as Hegel calls them, drives) can in my terms be “purified.”



16. See also Stanguennec 1985, 209; as well as Kant, *CPrR*, AA, 5:9n; *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, AA, 4:394; and *Metaphysics of Morals*, AA, 6:388–389.

17. Hegel 1973, 374–375; quoted at Williams 1997, 181.

18. See the first and third formulations of the categorical imperative at *Groundwork* 4:402, 429; see also Sullivan 1989, 57.

19. As Jürgen Habermas (1988a, 333–334) points out, “ethics of the transcendental type specialize in questions of justification; they leave unanswered questions of application. . . . No norm contains the rules of its application.”

20. See also Kervegan 1996, 42. At *PhR* § 6 *Anm.*, Hegel accuses Fichte of this.

21. “Respect for the moral law is therefore the sole and also the undoubted moral incentive” (*CPrR*, AA, 5:78; see the general discussion at AA, 5:72–89).

22. The charge is stated more clearly in the natural law essay of 1802, for which see 2:444; see also Habermas, 1988a, 321.

23. Though Hegel does say that “subjective satisfaction” is always present when a task is completed (*PhR* § 124), he does not explicitly identify it as the motive of the action; his overall point is that we have a right to find it (*PhR* § 121), not that it is always there. Wood (1993, 170–173) attributes this view to Hegel but cites the *Phenomenology* and *Enz.* § 475 *Anm.* He also finds it implied at *PhR* § 121 *Anm.*, but I do not. Hegel there identifies the motive of an action as having two sides: the “universal which is inherent in the purpose” and “the particular as part of the intention.” But he does not say that both have to be present in every case, and—contra Wood—he does not identify the purpose with the intention, either here or at *PhR* § 119 *Anm.*, to which Wood refers. The universal is that to which the particular ascends, toward which it “looks” (see the discussion of *Absicht* in Chapter 4); it is not itself said to be particular, that is, nonmoral (Wood, 1990, 150–151).

24. “Usually” because there are those who want, for example, to destroy the *entire* human race. Hitler’s last *Führerbefehl*, which in effect commanded the destruction of the German people, ranks high on the universality scale; but it was hardly praiseworthy. Still, the way Hegel has set up the moves from happiness to the good (see Chapter 4) means that someone who can even conceive of affecting humanity through her action will probably have its “satisfaction” in mind.

25. Herman (1993b, 8) sees Kant’s rigorism as motivated by a desire to make right action a “non-accidental effect of the agent’s moral concerns.” Hegel is trying to explain how this can come about.

26. Recent work at the University of Pisa tends to confirm this (Ananthaswamy 2004).

27. Thus, Wood (1989, 463) is both right and wrong to say that “all action is mediated by inclination, simply because every action has an end, and because the setting and pursuing of any particular end involves acting from empirical drives and inclinations.” Right, because all actions do involve particular ends—that is what differentiates them from other actions; but wrong insofar as it makes an undifferentiated use of the term “inclination,” suggesting the Kantian notion that all inclinations are morally equivalent rather than the more fine-grained Hegelian continuum.

28. For an illuminating discussion of these, see Wood 1990, 154–173.

29. In addition to Wood on this, see also Hoy 1989, 217; O'Hagan 1987, 145.

30. Hegel thus does not make the emptiness charge against the first formulation as Wood (1990, 157–158) thinks. Wood cites *PhR* § 135, but there Hegel explicitly concedes that the formula of universal law has content; his charge against Kant lies in the dualism I have just mentioned. It is surprising that the author Wood quotes (155) for the emptiness charge is not Hegel but John Stuart Mill.

31. This is what Moyar (2011, 18–19), relying on the *Phenomenology*, calls “practical immediacy.” Rawls (2000, 333) says that Hegel attributes to Kant, clearly wrongly, the effort to provide specific moral guidance to the individual. I can find no evidence, however, that Hegel actually did this. Kant's failure to provide what *Hegel* is after—an immanent theory of duties—is failure enough for Hegel.

32. Kant, *CPrR*, AA, 5:27–28. Hegel discusses this in the natural law essay of 1802/3 (2:462–463/77) and he is still talking about it in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* over twenty years later (20:368).

33. Wood 1990, 157; see also Korsgaard 1996d, 86–87, 95.

34. So much the worse, of course, for morality: see Williams 1997, 191.

35. O'Hagan, like Ramet (1983), believes that the adjustments Kant must make to meet this charge are relatively small: Kant could respond that this does not impugn the moral injunction against theft, which can be reformulated as “*given that there is property*, one ought not to steal.” Since this is exactly what Hegel says, it is hard to see how this point is supposed to refute him. Hegel's real disagreement with Kant comes on grounds O'Hagan (1987, 141) concedes: “Thus, while the general form of the Hegelian criticism of illicit presupposition is not valid, it nonetheless highlights Kant's failure to integrate systematically many of his particular examples.” That failure to integrate is the central issue.

36. For Ameriks and Sedgwick, see Ameriks 2000, 313–314; Sedgwick 1988b, 77.

37. According to Wood (1990, 161–167), Hegel makes the more definite claim that any maxim can pass the universalization test, but I am unable to find Hegel doing so at either passage Wood cites—*PhR* § 135 *Anm.* and *Enz.* § 54 *Zus.* Steinberger derives this view on Hegel's behalf by extending the deposits example to promising in general, saying that if there were no such thing as promises, one could not break promises: see Steinberger 1985, 150; and more generally, Wallace 2005, 21.

38. At *Phenomenology of Spirit* §§ 430–431 (3:317–319) and the natural law essay (2:462–469/75–82), Hegel makes the reverse charge: that no content can be justified by the moral law because every maxim, if pushed to universality, becomes contradictory. This claim does not appear in the *Philosophy of Right*.

39. Hegel's closeness to Kant on the issue of the emptiness of the moral law can be garnered when Herman explicates Kant so as to save him from the charge. As she puts it (1993d, 77), “the [categorical imperative] cannot be an effective practical principle of judgment unless agents have some moral understanding of their actions before they [evaluate their adequacy to the categorical imperative].” Though further discussion would take us too far afield, such knowledge is conveyed for Herman in what she calls

“rules of moral salience,” which thus correspond broadly to what Hegel means by *Sitten*, the components of ethical life. The main difference between the two is that for Hegel a *Sitte* is a duty, while for Herman it is not.

40. Hegel thus accepts one of two propositions that Ameriks (2000, 313) thinks he ought to attack: that “an absolute kind of freedom is a requisite for morality.” He rejects the other, that “such freedom cannot be had empirically.”

41. See Ramet 1983, 289. Ramet thinks that Kant could remedy this by “modifying his system only slightly,” that is, by clarifying his prior, content-bringing assumptions. As we will see, Hegel thinks the changes would be much more far-reaching.

42. Kant, “Toward Perpetual Peace,” AA, 8:365–366 (emphasis added); see also *ibid.*, 375n, and *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, AA, 6:95–96. The coercion characteristic of the Kantian state has been exhaustively documented in Deggau 1983, 225–279; as Stanguennec (1985, 230–231) puts it, the *Metaphysics of Morals* is a “betrayal” of Kant’s moral philosophy. See also Hoffe 1980, 20.

43. Which Kant calls “external freedom”: see “On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, but It Is of No Use in Practice,” AA, 8:289–290; and *Metaphysics of Morals*, AA, 6:239. For more on external freedom, see Uleman 2004.

44. Stanguennec 1985, 202. Or, as Hegel would put it, is in “absolute opposition” to it; see Sedgwick 2000a, 311. Humans, taken individually, are for Kant’s social philosophy what Barbara Herman (2007b, 19) calls “prudent criminals.” Taken collectively, they are a “nation of devils” (Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” AA, 8:366).

45. See Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, AA, 5:366–369.

46. Horstmann (1999) has seen the significance of the phrasing here but believes it amounts to the claim that Kant cannot “see” reality because he has separated being and reason. While I agree that this meaning is there, the passage is clearly much stronger—Kant not only cannot “see” ethical life, his philosophy is set against it.

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